

THE  
TWO COYOTES



DAVID GREW



not in Peel 3

To Dick

with all good  
wishes for your birthday  
from N. Y.

5-8-25-



# THE TWO COYOTES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE UNTAMED  
(HORSES OF THE WILD)

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THE TWO  
COYOTES  
*By* DAVID GREW

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## FOREWORD

So many books, supposedly of the Great West, have been written without the slightest regard for verisimilitude, that writing of that country as one has found it to be, one is inclined to offer apologies. To people used to reading Western stories, filled to the brim with nerve-racking action, a Western story in which somebody is not shot in every chapter, is apt to seem rather tame. Yet I have covered thousands of miles of that territory without getting a glimpse of the West about which one reads so much.

I was born in Traverse City, Michigan; but when I was about a year old, my father moved out to the prairies of North Dakota, where he took a government claim and became a homesteader. There we lived for thirteen years.

Since leaving the prairies the first time, I have gone back to them repeatedly. I have crossed the prairie provinces of Canada and have gone up as far north as Athabasca Landing, the old gateway to the Klondike.

I have taught school in some of the most

out of the way districts of Alberta. I know what it means to live in a log cabin, in the heart of the magnificent poplar woods about the North Saskatchewan River, when the wood fire must be kept going all night long. I know what it means to be thirty-five miles away from the nearest railroad station. I have visited any number of cattle ranches and horse ranches. I have bunked with cowboys in their "bunk-houses"; but I have never come upon a single specimen of that murderous, gunman type of cowboy that most books of the West portray, and that one is forever seeing in the "movies" *ad nauseam*.

If they must have shooting and killing in every chapter, why don't these writers choose large cities for their setting? I venture to say, without having the exact figures at hand, that there is more killing done in any one of our large eastern cities, in a single year, than in ten years in all that territory designated as the West. This, in all probability, is just as true of any of the other forms of lawlessness, supposedly prevailing in the districts where there are no local police forces.

Up in Athabasca Landing, one of the natives, the very type so often used in illustrating fur-clad, Klondike adventurers, speaking of the way books have misrepresented life in his country, told me the following illuminat-

ing story. A tall, lanky Easterner started from the Landing in the latter days of the gold rush. He secured a huge St. Bernard dog, hitched him to his sled upon which he had piled high his goods and his outfit, sat down on top of it all, and ordered the dog to pull. The dog, being a dog, did not rebel but struggled with all his might to do as he was bidden. They had not gone very far, however, when an officer of The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, appeared and arrested the man.

. . . . .

In THE TWO COYOTES, I have taken for my protagonists, a real coyote and a "human" coyote; because to my conception of prairie life, one is as indispensable as the other; while both have suffered injustice at the hands of some of those who have written about them.

The coyote is an animal that has been held in disrepute, because farmers look upon him as a marauder; yet what animal does not plunder? And in this, can we exclude man, himself? As a matter of fact, can we not find all the qualities which people refer to when they use the term "coyote" in its most exaggerated sense, much more discernible in human beings?

But I have no desire to glorify the coyote,

nor to make any sort of hero out of him. I have attempted to tell his story, the tragic, the comic, and the romantic side of it, just as it is being played on the spacious stage of the prairie. He has his faults, as we all have, and he has his good qualities; and his marvelous intelligence has been much overlooked. No animal has been more relentlessly hunted; and while whole species of other animals have been all but exterminated, the coyote lives and thrives in the shadow of the farmer's chicken coop. His knowledge of traps and guns and poison is uncanny.

I have in mind the picture of a pair of coyotes who "kept house" in a certain unfrequented but very beautiful hollow, through which I passed quite often on horseback. Invariably, when I had a gun with me, I would discover them only when they were out of range; whereas just as soon as I came riding through without my rifle, they would remain sitting on their haunches within a hundred feet of the trail, and regard me with freezing indifference.

In spite of his wolfish relationship, few wild things will tame more rapidly when the taming begins in puppyhood; and a pet coyote hanging around a farm yard is by no means a rarity; especially when, as often happens, there is dog blood in its veins,

The second coyote in my story, the human one, is somewhat the same sort of animal; and I say this with proper regard for both. There is not a section of the thousands and thousands of square miles of prairie land without at least one bachelor of the type of Bailey Bellard, living in his shanty, which is usually a sod hut, much like a coyote den, living a lonely existence, living it often with the breadth of view of life that only philosophers acquire.

Some of these reticent individuals are fairly educated men; while others are illiterate. Some are men who were broken down in the grind of civilization, and others are men who just naturally gravitated to the simplicity that that sort of life offers. Some are content and happy; and others are yearning for some other way of living; and in all this human deadwood, ignition sometimes sets in. Sometimes the flames quickly go out of their own accord; sometimes they themselves succeed in permanently putting them out; sometimes the fires smoulder on until death extinguishes them; but always these fires are as interesting as the fires of the human heart are interesting the world over.

There is a Chinese proverb to the effect that it is being broad-minded to seek similarities in life and narrow-minded to be looking

for differences. All too many of us are bent on finding those differences that might make us superior to our neighbors, that might make the thing we like seem better than it really is. In THE TWO COYOTES I have examined a portion of life which does, upon first sight, appear different and have sought, with a strong desire to be honest, to find similarities.

D. G.



# THE TWO COYOTES

## CHAPTER I

### BEHOLD : LIFE

**A**S the dawn makes clear the objects of the earth so infancy reveals life. Things first appear blurred and indistinct in the chaotic shadows of the unknown with but a glossy spot here and there reflecting the glare of existence. It is only the chance quality of things which strikes the awakening mind and leaves an impression there. The mind as it grows stronger seeks these impressions, sorts and classifies them, and with them makes out the whole. The smallest conscious entity, like the omnipotent power of God, says, "Let there be light!" and light is.

. . . . .

A sniffing, pointed little muzzle appeared in the center of the coyote den opening and moved slowly outward. Two piercing, curious eyes caught the light. Two pointed, furry brown ears, pricked for strictest atten-

tion, touched an overhanging, thorny branch of the rose bush that grew directly above the den opening, dropped back timorously a moment, then moved on out again.

Before the den opening there was a ledge of level earth. Reaching the ledge, the pup sat down on his haunches, like a full grown coyote, and brought his tail forward, throwing it carelessly about his feet. As the human soul is awed by infinity, so the pup was awed by the overwhelming wonder of life, the forces of which he daily saw, performing on the coulee bottom below him.

There were four other pups in the litter, but they obediently remained in the lair. They slept and played in the darkness, content to see the world only at such times as their mother felt they should see it. An impulse had sent the one pup, several weeks back, groping through the long winding passageway, while his mother had been out; and since then he had acquired the habit of stealing up, just as soon as she went away. His mother had come back that first time and had found him on the ledge. She had cuffed him soundly for his disobedience; but the cuffing, true to its characteristics as a corrective, had only made him watchful for her appearance and careful to get back into the hole as soon as he would become aware of her coming. For

the lure of the light was inexorable and the display of life like strong drink.

As the days went by and the pup's experiences on the ledge had accumulated, he had begun to behold life with disjointed clarity. Out of the welter of chaos had come individual things and creatures, being and moving upon a background which he accepted as the earth, the foundation of existence. The world that he had thus come to know, the world which he looked upon as the universe, as the beginning and the end of all existence, was Blood Indian Coulee, a ravine-like break in the rolling plains of Alberta.

At the bottom of the coulee and at the extreme western end of its somewhat level floor, ran Blood Indian Creek—when it was voluminous enough to run. In spring it had run when the snows, having lain long and deep upon the prairies, had melted and poured down the miles of coulee slopes. Then the tiny streams that rippled down the raw brown troughs which they had made for themselves had begun one by one to die out. The creek had begun toward the end of June to run in a lazy, sleepy manner; and by the middle of August it had ceased to run. Great patches in its serpentine back had dried up completely and pools, like small ponds, remained in the deeper hollows of its bed.

Above one of these pools, halfway up the slope of the coulee, immediately below the overhanging branches of a cluster of rose bushes, was the coyote den opening. Before the doorway of the den was the ledge upon which the pup sat, gazing out upon life. From the end of this ledge the slope of the coulee fell away steeply to the long line of bushes that fringed the water's edge. A similar line of bushes and a space completely covered with them finished off the other edge of the pond, and beyond that was the flat bottom of the coulee. The flats were marked by patches of dried mud, stippled with the thousand footprints of cattle. Beyond the flats, the other slope of the coulee climbed with convulsive irregularity to the prairies above. In the north and the south, this swollen portion of the coulee was lost in shadows, for the coulee had many turns.

To the pup these shadows were the beginning and the end, the birth and the death of existence. Above this little cave-like world bent the blue gray dome of sky. That many creatures came and went out of space, indicated no other worlds to the pup; for only when they appeared before him, did they exist at all. When he saw them, he feared them; but he was curious about them, nevertheless; and he came to feel their relations to

each other and to himself, the center of the universe.

He began to feel very vaguely that the earth, the grass, the rose bushes, and the water made in their union the stage upon which the living creatures played the game of life. The sky belonged to the birds. The skyline and the shadows at either end of the swollen portion of the coulee were the doorways through which things moved off the stage when the game rested. To eat and be eaten was the seeming purpose of life. He and his kind preyed upon gophers and birds and bugs and rabbits. He had seen his mother pursue some of these and catch them. He had seen them eating in the distance and he had seen them lie prone before him to be eaten. He was not touched by the slightest sympathy for these creatures when he saw his mother run after and seize them and heard their cries of agony. He was at such times too much absorbed in the expectant joy that the anticipation of eating gave him. Yet he half recognized in their hurried flight, their cries of terror and of pain, the fear *he* felt when some animal bigger than he surprised him near the den and he dived breathlessly into the passageway.

The meaning of pain he had learned through his mother, but fear he had never

had to learn. It had been with him from the beginning, the hazy unlocatable beginning. Just what to fear and what not to fear he had not completely learned as yet, though he did know that such things as grass or rose bushes, even when they pricked, were not to be feared. Bugs and gophers were not to be feared nor were ducks and small birds; but an eagle had terrified him one day, and hawks always worried him. His inability to differentiate with certainty between the creatures who were, and those who were not to be feared, made him extremely cautious and sufficiently fearful of all things to save him from the destruction which, even though he was not aware of it, lurked in every shadow, waiting for him.

There were many things and activities that he could not understand; but one thing puzzled him more than anything else in this little world of his, hung like a shadow over his existence. In a subtle way, it often aroused all of his other fears, when by forgetting them he had cast them aside for a moment, and refilled his little soul with them. Way beyond the opposite slope of the coulee, peeping over the skyline, the lower half hidden by one of the intervening folds of the prairie, stood a man's hut. A black point projected from its peak and from this point issued clouds of

smoke which sometimes came through the air and brought to the den a fearful odor. The moving smoke had turned the hut into a living thing that looked across the gaping lips of the coulee with a sinister threat. When there was no smoke, it slept. What it was he did not know; but fearing it and looking at it often, he became aware of the fact that it also worried his mother; for she too was constantly looking at it.

His fear of the hut dated back to a day when his mother had come from that direction. He had been up on the ledge and at sight of her had sneaked down into the den. They had all been called up to feast on the bird she had brought, and while they had been eating, she had shown herself to be restless and worried. Then all in a minute she had arisen and had begun to growl. He had looked up in time to see a bit of shadow break away from the larger shadow of the hut and move toward him. Just as he had gotten the first whiff of a peculiar odor, his mother had ordered them to go down below. She had taken the meat from them, but in the lair she had allowed them to finish the meal. He had eaten as ravenously as always, but his little soul, as he had eaten, had filled with the dread that his mother had communicated to him. Thereafter, his first act upon coming

to the surface was to look at the hut. Sometimes, when much smoke belched from the black point, he would go down again in fear.

But just as there were many things that worried him, there were others that inspired in him a great, almost uncontrollable desire to go forth and investigate; and the most fascinating of these was the water way down below the ledge. Nor did the one or two trips to the pond that his mother had allowed him to make with her, in any way allay his desire to go down alone and to wallow in the delightful wet coolness. And every single day that went by heated that desire to a higher degree.

He was sitting restlessly. Never had the water seemed more fascinating, its beautifully glistening surface more inviting. Snipes swept through the air high above the pool. Sandpipers ran up and down on the muddy shore at the right. He could see the white of their beautiful little breasts and he marveled at the rapid motion of their longish black legs. Their lugubrious calling, so weirdly pathetic, so tragically questioning, intensified his restlessness. His pointed brown ears turned from side to side and his glistening eyes followed them, as if he were seeking the meaning of that note of sadness in their



voices; while his mouth watered with the imaginary taste of their flesh and blood.

A group of ducks was lazily paddling round and round the center of the bright surface, stopping occasionally to turn a lateral eye in caution. A humming breeze slightly swayed the bushes and the tall grasses that had broken through the water in one place. Ripples played over the greater portion of the water, making it smile up to the heavens with a gladness which he subtly perceived.

He started down by placing one foot ahead, but just then a grasshopper hopped upon that paw. Without moving he watched it a moment, then struck at it with his open mouth, seizing only his own paw. The grasshopper was gone, and the pup looked after him with a foolish grin on his face. But suddenly his grin disappeared and his jaws closed firmly. His muzzle began working rapidly as he sought to make out the scent that was coming on the air.

Turning over the lip of the coulee, just below the point where the man's hut broke the skyline, came a strange creature. It walked on two legs, like a huge bird, moving forward with a peculiar stride. Whatever it did have on its strangely elongated body, it was neither fur nor feathers. Its head was horribly flat and light colored, radiating a

yellow glow. When the pup's amazement gave way completely to his fear, he fled to the den, pushing himself down backward and stopping when only his muzzle protruded from the den opening, ready to fly at a moment's notice, but held there by a curiosity that challenged his fear.

He caught sight of a badger, off toward the side and not far from the water, who had been lumbering along clumsily to the pool. He saw the badger stop suddenly, turn his muzzle toward the coming monster, look and sniff at it, then swerve as suddenly and run in the opposite direction in greatest haste. The birds on the shore as well as those on the water rose into the air and flew away.

Terror got the best of the pup for a moment; and he crept out of sight, lying near the lair in the passageway and listening breathlessly for any sounds of the approaching man. But when for some time there was no sound of any sort he began creeping cautiously up again. When he got to where he could see, he found that all living things had surrendered the world to this creature, who was standing in among the bushes. The pup watched him with moistened eyes. He saw him drop down into the bushes and disappear from sight. He watched the spot

where he had vanished, expecting him to reappear.

A considerably long time went by. Even the pup began to feel that the monster had really gone away. The birds came back noisily. The sandpipers came first, then came the snipes and finally the ducks returned and settled down upon the surface of the pond. The pup felt easier and moved out farther upon the ledge. That the man had left a trace of his scent in the air bothered him, but not as much as it had bothered him when he had first scented it. It served, however, to keep him from going down to the water as he should have liked to.

Suddenly there was a slight motion in the bushes where the monster had vanished and the pup could see him stirring there. He was so overcome with fear that he could not move. A black streak appeared pointing out from the bushes; then there came from it a flash of white, a cloud of smoke, and a crash of thunder that echoed from slope to slope and almost deafened him. Everything seemed to sway. The birds rose into the air with loud cries. A pungent odor came up from the man, and the very bushes seemed to have risen and started moving toward him. He felt the urgent need to run to the den, but he

was so frightened he could only crouch down upon his belly in abject terror.

The monster himself reappeared. The pup moved back into the passageway, and from there he saw the man rise and walk into the water. He felt, as he pressed throbbingly against the wall of the passageway, that this creature was not interested in him, and remained to look on, keeping himself ready to drop down into the lair, at the first sign of danger.

So he saw the man stride into the pond, splashing the water just as the cattle did when they waded in. He saw one of the ducks struggling on the surface, trying to fly away but unable to rise. He saw the monster seize it by the neck and shake it as his mother shook gophers when she caught them. When the duck ceased moving, the man walked out of the water with it, but instead of eating it, as the pup had expected him to, he went off with it.

The pup had seen his mother kill, but his mother had always chased her prey. This monster had not run after the duck at all. There had been storm, thunder, clouds and awful odors; and the duck had somehow been held down till he had gone into the water to take it. The pup had experienced thun-

der before; and he had always been terribly afraid of it; but he was now more afraid of it than ever.

The farther the monster got, the easier the pup felt. He watched him till he had disappeared in the valley between the coulee and the hill upon which the hut stood. After that, even though he saw nothing to threaten him, though a strangely heavy silence hung over the world, the chaotic impressions of the awful things he had seen and heard made the pup most uncomfortable up there alone; and he craved the touch and the companionship of his little brothers and sisters and the security of the dark lair. Not even the fascination of the shining water could keep him on the ledge.

Thus man entered his consciousness and from then on never left it. The dark, elongated form forever strode across the white fields of his being. During his sleep, the pup saw him in his dreams, and sometimes he trembled and whined till he would wake. The warm, caressing tongue of his mother would soothe him; and he would go back to sleep, often only to see the specter again.

But the creatures who played the game of life on the coulee bottom began rapidly to lose the blur about their forms. Life became

more fascinating each passing day, though the burden of watchfulness grew correspondingly heavier. Existence became as rich in the things that satisfy as it was terrible in its nameless possibilities.

## CHAPTER II

### BLOOD AND MEAT AND BATTLE

FOR a long time after his first glimpse of man, the pup remained in the lair, sleeping as the others or playing with them, when his mother went out. Then there came a hot day in the latter part of August. His mother had been gone all day. They had slept a long time and, weary of inactivity, he suddenly started up the passageway. He crept rapidly till he neared the opening then, recollecting the image of the man, he slowed down and lowered his belly toward the earth on which he crept, sniffing as he went and listening for sounds.

All he could make out, however, was a strong odor of cattle which only aroused his curiosity. When his eyes had adjusted themselves to the light, he saw that the coulee was occupied by the whole herd of cattle. He gave them a hasty glance and searched for the hut on the skyline. There was no smoke issuing from it now, nor was there any other sign of life about it. It stood rather gray and as motionless as the rocks on the coulee slope.

The monster slept and the world seemed more secure.

Assured of his safety the pup walked to the end of the ledge and sat down to study the cattle. They were standing or lying lazily, swishing away flies with their tails or just chewing their cud. In the center of the flats beyond the pool of water stood the red bull, surrounded by several of the other cattle. He was the largest animal in the group. His huge body was supported by four short legs like a house upon posts. His massive head was level with his body and his sides throbbed as the engine of a vessel, momentarily stopped. A cow was licking his neck with her long, white tongue, while he stood motionless apparently unconscious of her existence.

Not a sound came from the herd and not a head was turned in the pup's direction. Never had the hot coulee appeared more peaceful. Heat waves danced along the horizon over the prairies and the droning of insects filled the air with an almost visible drowsiness. Only a few snipes flitted to and fro above the water. But to the pup this view of his world was exceedingly interesting. His curious eyes moved slowly from one end of the panorama to the other.

Suddenly he felt the snap of a small pair of jaws behind him, and he jumped a foot into



the air for fright. He turned savagely upon a saucy little replica of himself who had lifted a small paw in playful defense. First he sprang upon him with the desire to punish him; then he caught from him the spirit of play and they rolled round and round the ledge. Three other furry little things came crawling up the passageway and joined the sport, growling with affected anger which was really an expression of their joy.

The cattle were completely forgotten. The world seemed a haven of safety and life a state of unmitigated delight. They rolled over and under each other and seized projecting legs and ears and tails which in the *mêlée* they did not know from their own. In the excitement of this happiest of their play times, they rolled over the ledge and down the slope, landing in a heap at the line of bushes which fortunately prevented them from rolling into the water.

Yet, when, at the expense of one another, they had regained their footing, had looked foolishly at each other and up the slope, and had discovered that though slightly different the world there appeared quite safe, they began to play again. The biggest of them, however, started inquiringly away. One of the other little fellows pulled at the pup's tail, bit at his hind legs as he went, and failing in this,

reached up for his ears; but the pup shook him off. He had something of greater importance on his mind. Here at last he was near the water, and his mother was not there to interfere with his every attempt to investigate it. He could smell the strong smell of mud and scum, and he was eager to get at it. As he ran along the line of bushes, the other little ones, sitting on their haunches, their tongues lolling out of their mouths, watched him curiously. What was he up to now?

Before he had reached the end of the line of bushes, however, they were up and after him. By the time he actually got to the water's edge, he was glad to have them behind him. Now so near, it seemed to be holding, hidden below its shining surface, dangers that he instinctively perceived, for the first time, because his mother was not beside him.

But the lure of that glistening wetness, rich in attractive odors, was even greater than his fear; and a step at a time, he made his way into it. A snipe, curious to know what he was about, swept through the air a few feet above him; and as the shadow of its form glided over the water before his very muzzle, the pup became alarmed and sprang back with a cry. The four little fellows, who were about to follow him, turned and fled with shameless

*ki-i-s.* They didn't go very far, however, before they turned to look back at him; and when they found him sitting upon his haunches and looking after the snipe in the air, they returned to his side.

The snipe kept very high; so the pup decided that he was harmless and gave his full attention to the bugs that were striking the water and rippling it so interestingly. He was just on the verge of making a second venture into the water, when the peaceful hum of coulee life was shattered by a thunderous bellow. The very flats and the slopes of the coulee seemed to have been set a-trembling. The snipes rose high into the air and vanished. The ducks that had come to the farther end of the pool flew away; and into the air came an almost perceptible feel of impending storm.

At first the four smaller ones gathered fearfully around the pup; then as they started together for the den, two of the little ones caught sight of their mother, coming down the other slope and instinctively turned toward her. They did not all run together. The weakest two went first and the pup went last. He remembered the cuffings he had gotten for leaving the lair unbidden. Only the fact that something very terrible was happening made him more afraid of being separated from his

mother than of his mother's punishment. He too started toward her, but he kept behind the others.

The mother coyote had crossed the flats. She was so excited that she did not notice her young ones. She sat down on the dry mud bed of the creek to watch the impending battle, the blood and the meat of which she seemed already to smell and to taste. The pup wisely allowed the others to approach her first, hesitating through fear of her fangs. At the same time he was most anxious to reach her side where he believed he would be protected against the impassioned cattle who were now gathering in groups, as angry storm clouds gather in the sky.

One of the little sisters who had never disobeyed her mother was the first to approach her. To the pup's surprise, the mother, absorbed in what was going on, nervously bent down when the little one touched her, and instead of cuffing her, gave her a hasty affectionate lick with her tongue. She then raised her head again and eagerly regarded the cattle. Greatly relieved, the pup abandoned his restraint and loped after the rest.

He found when he got to his mother's side that the other pups had usurped the most advantageous positions, between the mother's strong forepaws and halfway under her pro-

tecting body; so he sat down beside her just exactly as she was sitting and close against her side. Now that his fear somewhat abated, he was thrilled by the spectacle and understood it more clearly.

The red bull was very slowly and deliberately crossing the creek bed and bellowing horribly as he went. Down the western slope came a black bull, roaring his defiance as he came, stopping every now and then to paw the earth and to swing his great horns threateningly. Behind came another group of cattle, fearful yet morbidly curious, bellowing, coming by fits and starts and in a disorder that betrayed their fears.

When the black bull ceased pawing the earth, the red bull began to paw; and clouds of dust gathered in the still atmosphere above them. So, when the rumbling bellows of the red bull fell back into the last, low, guttural, throbbing notes, the black bull took up the challenge with his deepest tones; and all the while that the two blind forces of hate approached each other, fear blazed in the multitudinous eyes that flitted disorderly about them.

So long as the black bull had been on the incline, the red bull walked toward him slowly, a step at a time, almost as if he were hesitating; but just as soon as the black bull

had reached the end of the slope, the red bull made his charge. With his short, sharp horns, his heavy, white, curly-haired, battering-ram forehead out level with his back, he started for his enemy. The black bull, somewhat smaller, lost his courage for a moment and turned his head anxiously as if to take a look at the incline and survey the possibility of escape. At the same moment the cattle who had come with him, now far to the side and spread out beyond the coyote den, ran half-way down the incline. Despite their terror, they were morbidly desirous of seeing better.

The two savage bull heads met with a crash and a thud that accelerated the heart beats of every creature in the coulee. They parted a moment to make ready for a second charge. Hoofs began pounding the earth with wilder disorder. The mother coyote rose upon her legs. The fear-crazed cattle had shut off her retreat to her den. The little ones whining in terror clung to her sides, following her as she, forgetting the imaginary taste of meat, concerned herself completely with a way of getting home.

There came a frightful clash of horns, a sickening thud, then the half bleat, half groan of defeat and death. The black bull only three years old went down in a heap. Strange unearthly sounds began rumbling in all di-

rections, accompanied now by a more steady beating of hoofs. Multitudinous forms like billows began surging in the fear-blurred vision of the mother coyote. She started wisely and bravely eastward, intending to round the pool and reach home another way; but a savage-looking steer, maddened by what he was seeing and hearing, came bounding along. He drove her the opposite way, right towards the cattle of the coulee who were fleeing from the scene of battle.

With hoof and horn the red bull tore at the limp form of his antagonist till he realized that his victory was complete; then turning, his eyes red with blood lust, he madly charged into his own herd, who fled from him as from fire. The coulee seemed to grow dark. Passion turned every eye blind. The mother coyote, running fearfully, dodging hoofs and bodies, made her halting way through a moving forest of legs.

The pup ran, holding as best he could to the darting shadow of his mother in the chaotic darkness before him, still trusting in her power to protect and to save him. From obscure points in the maelstrom came the stifled cries of his little brothers and sisters as each one went down under the onslaught of hoofs. With each cry he weakened, became more ready to give himself up to the inevitable,

crouching as he ran, expecting a blow every moment. Then he lost his mother. He ceased running, feeling that haste was futile and helplessly sank to the ground. Suddenly a hoof struck him in its forward movement, lifted him and sent him flying through space. He landed a few feet away, a short distance up the eastern slope of the coulee, falling with a thud that dizzied him.

The desire to live roused him from his stupor, and he saw as soon as his mind cleared that he was safe. Instead of running up that slope, the cattle had swerved. They had followed the coulee bottom for several hundred yards, then had turned west. On the other side of the pool they scattered and clambered up the western slope, vanishing as soon as they had turned over the coulee lip.

Long after they had disappeared, when the dust had settled back and the coulee had ceased echoing with the patter of hoofs and the crazed, bleating bellows of the fear-maddened cattle, the pup was still lying on his stomach, backed against a small rock, afraid to move. From where he lay he could see the entire flats, the muddy parts churned up like a plowed field. Suspicious heaps lay here and there, and some seemed to be wriggling. Off where the battle had begun, lay the largest heap, motionless; but to the



pup it was alive, waiting for him to come out from the shadow of his small rock to pounce upon him.

Never had he been so afraid in his life before. He made out the den opening under the rose bush on the opposite slope; and despite all he had seen and half knew, he had the feeling that his mother and his brothers and sisters were all there. A dozen times the impulse to dash across the coulee floor and home seized him; but each time, fear of the awful flats held him back. He was afraid, however, that the cattle were going to come back and sweep over the flats again; and when this other fear grew to be stronger, he stole out, *ki-i-ed* for sheer terror, and raced for the den, his tail between his legs.

When at last he reached the ledge before the den opening, and turned to look back before he dived down, the world seemed to have somewhat righted itself. Things looked more familiar from there. On the skyline stood the man's hut; and from the point above the roof issued a strong, green smoke, rising considerably above the hut and spreading out.

The man! Was he and his thunder the cause of all the afternoon's horror? The pup dropped down into the passageway. He half expected to find his mother in the lair. But from the darkness came a hissing snarl. At

first the pup was for turning and fleeing, but a hasty whiff told him that it was his little sister. She was still suffering from her fright and was too excited to know that it was he. An appealing whine from him calmed her, however, and no longer afraid, he leaped down beside her and caressed her warmly.

How she had gotten there, what strange chance had made her escape possible, he could not know. He was too much occupied with the other emotions to worry his distracted mind with such useless considerations. The images of the motionless heaps he had caught glimpses of, in his hurried flight across the flats, bothered him. There was a vague rankling suspicion in his palpitating heart that his mother was not coming back; yet he hoped to see her coming and listened eagerly, from time to time, for the old familiar sound of the patter of her feet. Many times he thought he heard her, but each disappointing hallucination only strengthened that gnawing suspicion.

## CHAPTER III

### THE JOY OF MEAT

**T**HE pup was dreaming. He had fallen asleep, because in the soft, warm fur of his little sister and the rhythmic throbbing of her sides, he had felt a small sense of security; but he had carried the agitation of the afternoon over with him into his restless slumber. It was at the brink of life that he was, utterly unconscious of his body. He was looking down into his coulee world. The coulee of his dream was choked up with shadows but the shadows were partially transparent and imparted to the coulee an appearance of endlessness. All the things he had ever seen were in that coulee and in those shadows; yet nothing was as it had been before. A sickening motion seemed to be moving everything without moving anything anywhere; and one thing seemed to change into another as soon as his vision was centered upon it.

One form was persistently superseding all the other forms, and that was the form of the man. Two vertical lines like the legs of a rubber manikin, alternately contracting very

short and expanding very long, seemed to be walking across the uncertain spaces. A yellow glare, made up of the pup's notion of the color of the man's face, swept across the dark dome of the coulee like a dull display of lightning.

Over all the multitudinous forms the one form trod, and this treading was a silent and awesome declaration of its power. The other forms, like an enormous herd of cattle, so close together that only horns and backs were visible, making a dark gray pattern of bodies relieved by a lighter gray spatter of horns, wriggled and moved threateningly toward him.

Just when his fear of being caught under their hoofs was at its height and he was about to express it with a howl, the forms blended into each other. A thin shaft of light, like a quiescent flame of fire, rose up from the center of the bottom of the coulee, and lost itself in the light of the sky. Then suddenly, he felt that the force that had been holding him helpless released its hold; and he sprang up from sleep with a cry.

There were no forms and no light. Only the unbroken darkness of the beloved den and the moan of his little sister who, frightened by his jump, raised her head and whimpered. He licked her little face with his hot tongue

till she returned to her broken sleep and then, still trembling with excitement, he crouched down beside her, resting his muzzle on her back, staring through the darkness toward the passageway.

All the incidents of the awful afternoon came back to him, came back orderly yet mixed with the chaotic experiences of his dream. He made no attempt to understand. He only kept a sharp lookout against an attack from any one of the evils that seemed to have entered his den, and waited for the coming of his mother.

He was thinking of his mother when there came through the narrow passageway a shrill cry of coyotes. The sound, as it rose, strangely brought back to his mind the shaft of light that in his dream had risen from the coulee bottom. It shot like a skyrocket to the highest pitch; and there, like a rocket it broke into clusters of sound which dropped back into low guttural tones, seemingly more distant. He was sure that he had heard that sound before, and its familiarity was thrilling and consoling.

When it died away in the silence, he waited breathlessly to hear it again; and when it came again, it was a distinct call to him, an invitation to join the pack that was making it. The lair became uncomfortable and stifling.

He sprang toward the passageway waking his sister as he did so. Her whimpering brought him back. He caressed her a moment but refused to remain there. By the time he reached the ledge, he heard her whimper coming nearer, behind him.

It was night in the coulee. Halfway up the great dome above, directly over the man's hut, hung a big round moon. Down on the floor of the coulee, around the black heap of the defeated bull's body, was a group of coyotes. He was sure that his mother was among them, for it was there that he had seen her last. He was eager to go to her, but he was very much afraid. He moved around the ledge restlessly and whined with intense emotion.

As soon as his little sister was beside him, he steeled himself for the venture. Boldly he plunged down the incline, calling to her, stopping to wait for her as she lagged behind him, sitting down on his haunches, and licking his chops expectantly as he waited.

At the muddy shore of the water and near enough to the line of bushes to dive into them in case of danger, he sat a long while before he dared move on again. The strange coyotes, so like his mother, were not interested in him. That there were beings like his mother in his

world, he had but vaguely realized. In the half forgotten days of his infancy, he remembered obscurely the form of his father. At one time in those remote spaces of darkness that father had failed to return. He felt his kinship with these creatures; and yet, he was afraid of them. Why his mother did not leave the group and come to him, he could not understand; and he wanted to cry out for vexation.

He could hear the tearing of flesh from the carcass. His mouth watered and his tongue flashed out now and then with desire. Whatever his mother might be thinking, he wanted to eat. So he got up again and moved on, coaxing his sister to follow and keeping in the lead.

Despite the audible tearing of flesh and skin, the droning of insects, and the occasional lazy croaking of frogs, there was a peaceful stillness hanging over the moonlit night, that was reassuring; so the pup moved persistently nearer the carcass. And the nearer he got to it, the less he expected to find his mother among those who were feeding upon it.

His line of approach lay in the direction of an ugly, grizzled old fellow. As the pup neared him, he halted, raised his muzzle and sniffed. The old fellow, becoming aware of

him, hastened the tearing off of the piece of meat he had seized, and holding it between his teeth, growled savagely.

The pup turned and fled so disorderly that he stumbled over his sister who was just as anxious to get away. But a short distance off they stopped. The old fellow was evidently not going to run after them. The pup then led halfway up the incline, so that he could reach the other side of the dead bull. This time they approached a less savage coyote. She was not their mother, either; but merely looking at them, once, she went on feeding with an indifference to them that gave them courage.

They were exceedingly hungry; and once they touched the meat, they gave themselves over to gorging like all the rest. They were alarmed at first by every unusual sound or movement, but their fears soon left them.

The old grizzly coyote had been the first to come. Having eaten so much that his sides were noticeably distended, he could afford to stop now and then to give thanks for the joy of meat, in the weird yowl of his race. Sometimes, moved by something this yowling aroused, others picked up his grace as soon as he had finished. To the pup there was something terrible and stirring in this yowling. Every time he heard it, he felt at once a desire



to crouch out of sight and an urge to sit down and imitate it. But he was too far estranged in that assemblage, to dare such an imitation, too eager to be let alone and unnoticed.

After one of the grizzly old fellow's calls, another pup arrived. He was bigger than the pup but still not mature. He too was afraid of those who were stronger than he, and quite naturally selected the space next to the pup and his sister. At first the pup was wary of him and eyed him through the corner of his eye as he ate; but once, in his eagerness to tear away a piece of skin, he fell to the side, striking the new arrival and almost throwing him over. The pup was terrified at what he had done. He was ready to run for his life; but he soon saw that the stranger was not the least offended. Without even a growl the good-natured fellow returned to his business of bolting meat as fast as he could tear it from the carcass.

The pup was so happy and so grateful, it seemed impossible for him to go back to his feeding without an expression of that gratitude. He reached over to his neighbor and licked his face. The bigger pup took time from his feasting to return an equally warm lick. The pup was ready to abandon the sumptuous meal, and play with this delightful stranger; but the other showed signs of pre-

ferring to eat more; and so he, too, soon went back to his meat.

The older coyotes crept away, one by one, when they had eaten all they could hold; but the three pups remained to play. The night seemed too lovely to abandon. One started off, and the other two seized his legs and pulled. They tripped him, falling upon him in a heap; then one of the two rose out of the pile and moved on till he was tripped by the others. Thus they played till they wearied. Suddenly the bigger pup got up and loped away. The pup and his sister looked after him a moment, then turned and trotted up the slope.

The blackness was fading out of the sweet, coulee night; and the bright gray light of the moon dulled as the early rays of dawn opposed it. In the east, beyond the bit of shadow of the man's hut, lay a faint streak of pink. When the pup began to climb, he was alarmed by the pale moon which looked down at him from the west, where he had not seen it before. Several times his doubt halted him and forced him to crouch, belly to earth, in groveling uncertainty; but in his mind were images of the den and the sensations of warm bodies to which he had cuddled so often; and a heavy drowsiness was taking hold upon him.

When at last he broke into the black hole of

the den opening, his fears dissipated. Here, he was suddenly struck with a yearning for his mother. Down below, he hoped to find her; but the lair was empty. His sister, however, was immediately behind him, and lying down very close together, they went to sleep.

What was a pup to do if his mother did not come? The wise submit to forces that are stronger. Anyway, there was meat in the world, and so the world was good.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PRICE OF LEARNING

**A**LL day the pup slept soundly. When he awoke at evening, he felt very much refreshed and stronger. He rose and stretched, experiencing a sense of satisfaction with himself, as if he had grown to maturity in the night. He was accustomed to waking up and finding his mother gone, for that had happened so many times; yet there was down in the depths of him a feeling like emptiness; and as he hastily crept up the passageway, he was stirred by the baseless expectation that he would find her on the ledge, or coming up the the slope.

But there was too much to occupy his mind, as soon as he reached the ledge, for him to give himself to any extent to his disappointment at not finding her there. In the dusk that had already begun lowering, he made out several forms on the coulee bottom. Most of the coyotes who had feasted on the carcass, the night before, were a short distance away from it; but they seemed to have lost their interest in it. They were sitting on their haunches

considerably scattered, while the grizzly old fellow, very much nearer to the carcass than any of the rest, was scratching dirt with his hind legs, and driving it backward upon the dead bull, with an unmistakable contempt.

The pup was overcome with a desire to do likewise; and, right where he was, he got up and began to scratch vigorously. A cry from his little sister, whom he had struck with a hind paw just as she had come up the passageway, halted him.

Had the coyotes down in the coulee been feeding as he had seen them feeding the night before, he would have gone down to join them at once; but their sitting as they were, in a position to see him coming, made him hesitate. He watched them anxiously, waiting for them to begin to eat; when he intended to start down. The grizzly fellow stopped scratching dirt and went up to sniff the carcass again. The others joined him; and when he scratched dirt upon the meat, once more, the others did likewise. This time, however, they did not do much scratching. One of them started away, and the others followed. Halfway up the slope they separated; and at various points on the coulee lip, they vanished.

The pup was very much excited. Now was indeed the time to go down there; yet he was more afraid now than before. To be

down there alone with his little sister, and so much space about them, so many evil possibilities, was not very encouraging. He was pulled about by impulse and fear till he resembled a jumping jack. Suddenly he discovered a little grayish form haltingly making its way down the slope, and recognized his newly made friend of the night before.

At once and with great joy, he sprang off the ledge and his sister went scurrying after him. The stranger pup stopped when he saw the pups coming, pricked his ears and looked towards them anxiously then recognizing them, loped toward them with ears thrown back. They licked each other's faces for a while and played about a few minutes; then as with one mind, they trotted toward the sinister black heap on the coulee bottom.

At first they traveled around the carcass in single file, sniffing and examining it for a good place to feed; then each in his own selected spot, began to tear at the meat. There was a strange distracting odor about it this night that disturbed the pup considerably and forced him several times to stop eating. He sniffed suspiciously, and he ate with suspicion for a long time, throwing pieces out of his mouth and sniffing them, after he had thrown them out. Suddenly he heard his little sister

whine; and looking up, he saw her start away.

Both he and the stranger pup stopped eating and regarded her. She went less than a dozen feet and toppled over, and her falling was so strange that the pup realized that something dreadful had happened to her. He became very nervous and excited and trotted toward her hesitatingly. When he came quite near he sat down to watch her, afraid to touch her; but she was already quite oblivious of him. She was lying on her side and gasping for breath, too far gone to be able to make a sound, though she was very evidently struggling to do so.

While the pup was trying to make up his mind to go nearer to her and see what was wrong, there came from the bigger pup a distressful yelp. He turned his head to look. He saw the big pup crawling painfully away into the shadows of the night as if his lower limbs were breaking down. His first thought was of the den and his mother, and he started away with a strangely nauseous feeling which had begun in his stomach and was creeping upward and making him dizzy.

By the time he had reached a point from which he could see the water smiling in the pool, the awful feeling in his stomach had turned to an acute pain; and an intense fever had begun heating his blood. He wanted to

avoid the pool and to go toward the den; but the thirst that had seized upon him swerved him to the right. He meant to go just near enough to the water to drink; but he was so confused by the terror of what was happening to him, that he plunged blindly into it. In his gasping attempts to rescue himself from drowning, as he turned laboriously about, his mouth filled with water and scum.

The nauseating stuff went right down into his stomach and seemed to make him feel even worse than before. His stomach began at once a violent effort to get rid of it; and in the process, he lost consciousness for a moment, losing his balance as well. A stream of the obnoxious matter shot forcefully from his mouth. He struggled blindly to regain the solid earth but only went down again. Again he swallowed great gulps of water and scum and once more his stomach went into violent convulsions to expel it.

At last he managed to reach the dry mud and there he dropped exhausted. As soon as he regained his breath, however, he was overcome by an intense fear of the very darkness about him. He got up despite his weakness and started away to the side, intending to go around the water. But he turned again too soon and plunged into another puddle, before he saw his mistake. This puddle was not



very deep, and so he managed to drag his tortured little body through the mire and to reach the line of bushes on the other side.

In the security of the bushes, he lay down, groaning despite a cautious desire to suppress his groans, and struggling with the waves of darkness that were beating against his consciousness. After an hour's rest he felt much better. But he was yet very weak and the agony in his stomach, subsiding for a while, returned at intervals, at each return somewhat less poignant.

The night had lowered full force. There was no moon yet and the darkness was almost opaque. A soft breeze disturbed the bushes about him, and the skin all over his body trembled as they swayed. From the far distance came the faint yowling of coyotes, shrill voices, complaining to the heartless forces of existence against the torture of helpless little things.

Just when he made an attempt to strike out for the den, there came the doleful hooting of an owl; and he shrank back again with a petulant desire to whimper. But he was afraid to utter the sounds that would have relieved him.

He lay there panting for breath as if he had run many miles. The hooting of the owl seemed to be receding; and then it ceased al-

together. With the owl gone and the darkness heavy, he ventured from his frail retreat. Going up the incline was peculiarly difficult. The pup could hardly understand things. His legs were weak and very shaky. He was obliged to stop often to rest; yet he was afraid to rest long. The darkness was just as threatening as it was shielding. His body sickened with physical torture, his mind distracted with anguish, he imagined something moving upon him at every whisper of the harmless breeze. Twice after he had made considerable headway up the seemingly impossible slope, he fell back to the bush line; but the urgent need to get to the safety of the den did not let him rest there.

Half the night he spent in the torturous struggle to get up to the ledge; and when he entered the passageway at last, he slid downward toward the lair. The pain in his stomach, the weakness in his legs, the fever all over his body seemed to come back upon him just as soon as the security of the den took his mind from the fear of being attacked; yet he felt better there, and minded his agony somewhat less. Out of harm's reach, he gave way to his unhappiness in plaintive groaning and whimpering, till sleep came to his relief.

## CHAPTER V

### THE WAY TO SURVIVAL

**I**F the pup recognized the difference between night and day, he kept no records of their passing. How long he lay in his lair, moaning and suppressing his noise when fear of being heard warned him, how long he lay in a semistupor after he had ceased moaning, just throbbing with the exertions of convalescence, he could not know. But it seemed to him that the night when he had partaken of the poisoned meat was ages back, somewhere in the very beginning of the life in which he was now old; while that stranger moment, when the storm of hoofs had broken over him and taken his mother away, was like the hazy experience of a dream.

He became conscious of a change in his condition through a weariness of lying in his den, which he could no longer relieve by turning from side to side. There came an intense desire to drink. Several times he was forced to drag himself down the slope into the shadows of the frightful coulee to slake that thirst.

Then came a cessation of the pain in his stomach and finally a great desire to eat.

It was a hot day above. A sad mist as of sand hung over the hollow and slightly reddened the sunlight. A gentle wind poured over the lip of the coulee in a warm flood and teased the grass and the rose bushes. A dead silence prevailed; and the heap of carrion lay motionless, just as he had last seen it. Snipes and sandpipers hovered about the pool.

He was intensely hungry; and he moved restlessly about the ledge; but he remained there a long time before he dared go down. In the desolate spaces before him was the man invisibly creeping around. There was in the pup's mind a subtle connection between all that he had suffered and the two-legged monster who was in the habit of coming out of his hiding, now and then, to wreak his destruction. He sat for hours upon his haunches, gazing inquiringly from the significantly still heap of bad meat to the significantly lifeless hut on the skyline. Both were motionless; yet both were not to be trusted. All the while, hunger aroused impulses; and fear suppressed them.

He would raise his little muzzle to the wind; and with eyes half shut, he would whine for sheer loneliness, protesting against

the dreary change that had come over the world and calling in vain for the warm, living creatures who had been such a part of his life, and who had so mysteriously gone out of it.

Time after time, he ventured down to the shore of the pool for water and the bugs he could get on the surface of the pond. Always, after remaining down there a while, fear would overcome him; and he would go racing back to the ledge. But the craving for food began making it impossible for him to stay there. Down he would go again and again, each time remaining longer and with increasing boldness.

He was completely absorbed, one time, in his pursuit of bugs, when he was startled by the shrill half bark, half whistle of a gopher. First diving into a bush, he turned and fearfully examined the slope in the direction whence the sound had come. He saw three gophers standing upright, halfway up the incline and beyond another rose bush, somewhat to the north of him.

Instantly his whole frame was fired with the excitement of the hunt. Weakness was overlooked and fear was pushed aside. His eyes glared with the fires of his hunger, and his paws responded to his will like the paws of a cat. He crept back up the slope making

himself almost invisible; then he stole up to the rose bush unseen; and there, with beating heart, he waited for his opportunity.

That he was about to inflict pain upon these little creatures no more concerned him than it had concerned the larger forces who had inflicted pain so unsparingly upon him. Here was meat and meat he had to have. For several minutes he lay hidden, shivering with uncontrollable eagerness; then, because he was inexperienced, he rushed out upon them. It happened that the burrows of two of the gophers were further north. They fled at once. The other one had his burrow south of the rose bush. He started down the slope intending to give the coyote a wide berth, but aiming for his burrow. He ran as fast as he could, squealing in fright, his mouth filled with grass which he had hoped to add to the heap he had already gathered for the winter.

The pup was not strong enough to overtake him. His desire was so great, and his disappointment at seeing the thing slipping from his jaws, as it were, was so keen, he whined impatiently. The foolish gopher, the most foolish animal on earth, came to where he should turn up to get home, and stopped. There he stood squealing, his sides visibly throbbing, as eager to save himself as the other creature was eager to destroy him.

Instead of sensibly running away in any other direction, he could only think of his burrow and wait for his chance to get to it.

The pup seemed to feel that he had now the best of the situation; and almost imperceptibly, he kept approaching the frightened gopher who watched him a few minutes' then stupidly attempted to rush by him. He started to one side when it was too late. The pup sprang upon him but just missed him. So frightened that he did not know what he was doing, the gopher turned to the opposite side and dashed right into the little coyote, crying foolishly as if his cry could awaken the mercy of the pup who wanted to eat. The pup seized him by the nape of the neck and shook him so hard and so long that he became dizzy, shaking, and dropped him. The gopher was dead and lay where he had fallen. The pup looked down with a grin of satisfaction. Here was meat, meat that he had earned. If he could get one gopher, he could get more. The problem of life was solved. This was the way to survival.

He took hold of his quarry and carried it back to his den. On the ledge he sat down to breakfast. Throughout the time that he ate, he kept sniffing the air in all directions, watching the hut and the heap on the coulee floor. Never again would he touch that

carrion. He had a better way of earning his living. With the possession of this newly acquired ability, half the dread of the world had vanished.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE COURSE OF LIVING

AS the days went by the pup made a mental map of the coulee on which he marked the forbidden regions with a distinctness that brooked no transgression. The very air was different for him over these proscribed areas, and the smell of man seemed to pervade it. So at the side nearest to him the water of the pond was cool and refreshing, while on the other side it was acrid with the poison of his fear.

The cattle began coming to the flats more and more often as the lateness of the summer dried up other sloughs. The red bull forever grumbled or quarreled with some one or another, most of whom just fled at his approach; yet the pup ceased to be afraid of him. They would come down the old buffalo trail, showing the effects upon them of the heat, stopping often as they came to combat the insects who annoyed them with torturous persistency. The pup would watch them carefully; but he would start up to his den with apparent indifference, holding his head sideways and

backward as he went, feeling that even if they should become threatening, he could now easily outrun them.

In time he realized that they hardly ever noticed him. They were not his enemies. In a similar category, he learned to place badgers, weasels, skunks, snakes and other adult coyotes. He would frequently come upon some of these; but though he knew that they were dangerous, when interfered with, none of them ever ran after him, when he fled from them. He began to feel that so long as he minded his own business, they would not bother him. "Turn aside a bit and I will turn," was the common law; and the pup lived up to it religiously and avoided trouble.

That the man was the arch enemy of the coulee creatures was a conviction which the pup had early acquired; and every day, in some subtle manner, it was sustained. The man came often and he always carried away ducks and other prey; and always he left behind him a trail of death. Sometimes the pup would hit that trail for a short distance, but never did he touch the gophers or the weasels that lay dead upon it. He would sniff at each of them, then turn and scratch dirt upon them as he remembered seeing the grizzly old coyote do. Man spread ruin and death wherever he went; and the meat that

came about through him was poisoned meat.

His mother, his sisters and his brothers were now but shadowy forms that had been, receding with all the other shadows in the past and daily becoming less distinguishable there. The hunger for them turned into a vague protest against the loneliness of existence to which, nevertheless, he was fast becoming accustomed. His adaptation came about through the insatiable demands of hunger, and the weariness that always followed the long and arduous efforts to appease it. Busy most of the time pursuing gophers and field mice, bugs and birds—sometimes with so little success that he would be forced to subsist on the wild rose seeds and other growing things that he did not like—he would come back to his den worn out, drop in his lair exhausted, and fall into a restless sleep.

He awakened from one of these, one day, because his hunger pangs were too insistent to let him sleep; and finding the coulee deserted, he trotted down for a drink. He had come within a few feet of the water when he discovered a mother duck with a belated brood of ducklings who were yet unable to fly sufficiently to save themselves. They were quietly running off through the grass, when he espied them. At once, he made a frantic dash for them. They tried to fly away, but

soon dropped and spread in all directions; so bewildering him, that he did not know which way to turn first; and before he knew it, they had disappeared. At the same time, the mother duck, flapping a wing as if it were broken and she were trying in vain to get away, cried so loud that she caught his attention. He gave up seeking the young ones and started after her.

Surely she was wounded. She was trying very hard to get away,—that was so evident. What a prize! The pup's eyes almost protruded out of his head. He was terribly worried lest some other coyote come along and take her from him. It was a matter of just exerting himself a little harder and seizing her. It was an exasperating chase, however. As soon as he would be almost upon her, she would manage to get out of his reach; then she would go on crying frightfully and keeping her mouth open as if she were soon going to die of fright.

The pup strained himself still harder. She turned over the lip of the coulee; and there, on the prairies that stretched away to the distant horizon, she seemed even worse off than before. Two or three times he almost caught her tail with his mouth. Surely she could not last much longer.

The flat prairie was a strange land to him.

He was not at all comfortable there; yet he had no time to make investigations. Another moment he would have her; then he would run back with her as fast as he could.

He began to suspect, after a while, that something was wrong and stopped, mouth open, tongue lolling panting for breath. She on the other hand, went on as before. Suddenly she fell as if into a hole, and with rapid cries of fear, began to struggle in one place. With a cat-like leap, the pup tried again. This time he actually seized a mouth full of feathers; but still she got away; and the pup, spitting out the feathers, now followed her even more energetically. The taste and the scent of her was in his mouth. Another step and he would have had her. He was almost out of breath; but the prize was too rich to abandon now.

Thus she led him more than a mile from the coulee; and suddenly, to his utter dismay, she rose into the air and flew away as perfectly as any duck had ever flown. With a foolish expression on his face, his head tilted, he looked after her a moment; then he turned and started anxiously backward. When he realized how far she had led him, he was terror stricken. He loped as if he were being pursued, loped until he felt that he had already covered more space in his efforts to get

home than he had chasing the duck. Pursuing the duck, he had followed a curve without knowing it. In his attempts to return to the coulee, he had turned completely around and had loped in a straight line.

He was lost. He looked in every direction; but recognized nothing. He started off again toward the side, trotting slowly, seeing nothing familiar and surveying the endlessly rolling plains with growing alarm. Several times he changed his course; but one shallow hill was like another, and the coulee with his den and the pool seemed to have vanished from the earth. The immensity of those prairie spaces, which he had never seen before, made him feel even smaller than he was and filled him with a fear and a loneliness that was crushing.

He came to the crest of one of the many low hills and saw, in the hollow beyond it, the mud bed of a dried slough. In the center of the large black circle, there was a swamp of tall rushes that had turned yellow. They were waving in the breeze; and the fear that some living thing was hiding there kept the pup's eyes riveted upon them.

He was just obeying an impulse to run on, when his eyes fell upon a coyote den to the side, in front of which a group of pups were playing. His heart began beating more rap-

idly. His eyes glistened with an interest as great as that of the chase. All the impenetrable distances between the infancy he vaguely remembered and the present seemed to become transparent; and he started forward eagerly, feeling almost as if he were going back to the home he had lost so long ago.

Cautiously studying the earth all around him as he went, and going more and more slowly, holding himself ready to flee in case of danger, he approached the den and the playing pups. He was worried about what might come out of the den behind them; but never, in all his short existence, had he longed for anything more ardently than he longed to touch and to feel these little coyotes. He arrived so quietly that the pups didn't notice him till he was almost upon them. Though he made his friendliness as obvious as he knew how, they fled into the den as rapidly as they could push their way in. Two of them, however, the last two to get in, turned about near the opening; and seeing that he had stopped a short distance away, they stretched forth their muzzles and sniffed.

He thereupon began wagging his tail and moving toward them with such humble friendliness that they let him come without running away. A few paces from the den

opening, he lay down and rolled over and over; and they moved toward him as he rolled, keeping their muzzles stretched forward and sniffing. Finally he sat up and extended his muzzle. Their noses touched. The formal introduction was accomplished. The rest of the group came tumbling out; and with a few more sniffs, the pup had acquired a relationship. It was as if he had found his own brothers and sisters.

He stretched his forepaws out before him, bent his back, and rolled over and over for them, goading them into play, by seizing at various legs and pressing them between his teeth with affectionate care. Even his hunger was forgotten in this delight of companionship. A feeling of security came over him. Now that he was *home*, food would once more be provided.

But he had not been playing a very long time when he felt a sharp nip on his haunch, the only part of him exposed, the rest of him being covered by his playmates. He realized that it was not the spirit of playfulness that had driven those teeth. He sprang up, throwing two of the little fellows over, and saw the threatening fangs of the mother coyote, hanging over him. He hastily crept out of reach; but he was very loathe to leave, especially now, when the smell of a freshly



killed chicken was in the air. The little ones were already tearing away at the dead fowl. When she saw that he was inclined to come back, the old coyote turned heartlessly upon him again. The pup went off a little farther; but when he was sure the mother coyote was not coming after him, he stopped once more. He sat down on his haunches; and licking his chops, he watched the more fortunate pups feast.

That this was not his old home was now altogether too evident for him to fail to see; yet the yearning in his heart for their goodwill and for a portion of the meat they were devouring kept him vainly hopeful. The mother coyote, however, was not at all pleased with his presence. Leaving her little ones she made after him, this time chasing him, till in abject terror he dived into a clump of bushes. There she let him go and returned to her pups, as if she had accomplished a great feat. Beside her young she sat down and kept an eye on the bush into which she had driven him.

Hidden among the dried bush leaves, he could see them eat without being molested. He pushed out as far as he dared and there, wearily lay down. His chin resting on his folded forepaws, chewing grass and spitting it out in disgust, he waited patiently with the

hope that they would retire and leave some bones that he might later steal.

But they were not in a hurry to leave the table for him; and the pup grew weary of many a position before at last they were drowsy with too much meat and went down into the den to sleep. He waited till he was sure they were not coming back; then he started stealthily toward the feathers and bones which he could see.

They had not left very much for him. With the exception of one bone they had cracked the others and sucked the marrow out of them. He was, however, very glad to get the one bone and he carried it off in great haste to the bushes, lest the old mother coyote come out and take it from him. Then he returned; and finding nothing but feathers, he selected a few that looked as if there might be something to eat on them, and carried them off too. He made himself a comfortable spot to lie on, deep in among the bushes, and there proceeded to get all that one can possibly get out of a bone.

But what he really derived from it was a stronger desire for something substantial to eat; and he was soon off upon another hunt. He circled round and round the slough seeking gophers but he did not search very far. He knew that mother coyotes go away to

hunt; and the pleasure of playing with her pups had magically turned that foreign hollow into an almost more homelike place than the coulee. As he trotted along, he kept looking back to make sure that he would know how to return.

When at last, he caught a gopher, he came back with it, intending to take shelter in the bushes; but on his way and within sight of the den of his new found companions, he came upon one of those countless holes that badgers dig in order to get at the gophers, and that they abandon as soon as they have secured their prey. Upon the fresh yellow earth thrown up at the side of it, he sat down to eat his meal. When he was through with that, he examined the hole carefully; and finding it entirely free from any objectionable taint, he adopted it for his home.

Here he lived for some time in comparative peace and happiness, keeping out of the way of the old mother coyote, playing regularly with her young ones, and stealing the left-over crumbs from their table, when there were crumbs left over to steal.

Among the litter of four pups was one he liked best. She was the prettiest of them all, and her fur was softer than that of the others. Often when he played, he would bury his muzzle in her fur and hold her down im-

movably. Sometimes she struggled to get up; and at other times she did not struggle; and they would remain in that position till the others, more restless, would tease them back into playfulness. His evident predilection for her aroused a similar feeling in her for him; and she was always the first to come out, when he arrived.

When the second week in this new home had ended, he felt as if he had been there all his life; and all that had gone before was like the stronger impressions of a dream. He had made no attempt to conciliate the old mother coyote, accepting her hostility as one of the many evils over which he had no control; but he learned of her habits so perfectly that he always managed to keep out of her way. He knew just when she went off to hunt, and just when she was about to return; and he went to do his own hunting when the pups were least likely to want to play. But hunger sometimes changed his regular schedule. So it happened, one day, that when the old coyote had gone off, he was too hungry to think of playing and went some distance behind her.

It was a dull day. The sky was overcast by an unbroken layer of heavy dark clouds. But it was unusually warm and still, for that time of the year; and the gophers were out in goodly numbers. The pup drove a gopher

into his burrow and sat down near the hole to wait for him to come out again. He waited a very long time only to catch sight of him a dozen feet away, in one of his other doorways, eyeing him with no little interest.

He sprang toward him foolishly, did not get him, and walked off to try his luck somewhere else. He had gone but a few feet, when he saw the old mother coyote, coming toward him at full speed. She was less than a hundred yards away and was being pursued by two wolf hounds, a like distance behind her. The pup could see that the hounds were gaining upon her.

He now had but one desire and that to get out of sight. He did not even stop to select the best direction. She was coming toward him and he knew that it was necessary for him to get out of her way. He was afraid to turn to either side, feeling that if he did, they might head him off; so he went on in the same direction; and never in his life before had he called upon his legs more fervently.

For a very long time he loped without daring to look back. Suddenly his excited eyes beheld a long thin shadow on the prairie flatness a quarter of a mile before him. He stopped a second to regard it. A wave of terror swept over him. Was he trapped? There was no way of getting around it, for it

seemed to reach from horizon to horizon. From behind him came the eager yelping of the hounds. He could tell by the sounds they were making that they were within reach of their prey. Without further considerations, he plunged ahead. The line of shadow widened; and then he saw that it was his own beloved coulee.

At the coulee rim, he heard the tragic cry of the mother coyote somewhere in the hollow, behind him. He leaped down the slope despite the cattle who were in his way, scattered over the flats. Many of them turned to look at him but he paid little heed to them. His life was at stake. Bravely he made his way through the herd, actually slipping right under one of the cows.

He wouldn't take the time to go round the pool. He waded right into mud and scum, splashing and struggling, as the cattle looked on, and dashed into the line of bushes on the other side. A hasty look assured him that the hounds were not on the coulee lip where he had expected to see them and so he trotted up. At the den he sniffed to ascertain whether any one had occupied his home while he had been away; and finding that no one had been there, he dived down, reaching the lair out of breath.

He was safe; and yet he was none too con-

fidant of his safety. In his imagination there was a long line of hounds, running one behind the other and covering the entire distance he had covered in his flight, leading right to the den opening. But as the hours passed, the imaginary hounds went their way; and the pup, with the image of Soft Fur in the darkness before him, fell asleep.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE OGRE

**F**OR some time the old coulee was the pup's refuge even though the shadow of the man constantly hovered over it. There were no swift running hounds here; and he had begun to feel that he knew how to avoid the man. Had not that frightful two-legged Ogre come down time and time again; and had he not managed always to be away, or down in the den, or in the passageway watching him unseen? The coulee was more familiar to him than the open prairies and there was much less space to it. He knew every path and every shrub on the slopes; and no matter where he might be caught unawares, there was always some rock or bush against which he could crouch out of sight till danger passed.

He ceased to fear the smoke that would at times pour out of the black point on the hut. Even when it came down into the coulee, he was not so much afraid of it as he used to be; for he had found after it had come time and time again, that no evil resulted. So, too, he



ceased being afraid of the cattle, though when he glided between the scattered individuals, he was anything but comfortable. He was not the least bit pleased when the red bull stopped grazing and lifted his huge head to look at him; but he did not run. He realized the necessity of pretending to be less afraid than he was; and he knew that if the bull threatened him, he could run faster than that huge creature. The bull seemed to know it too, and never threatened him.

Despite the unforgettable images of the pursuing hounds, in his mind, despite the old mother coyote's cry of death, which he still faintly remembered, he began to go up again to the prairies above and wander around, slowly searching for the pups whom he could not find. He would not allow himself to go very far, however, and always kept looking back as he went, so as to make sure that he would not again lose his way. He never deliberately went searching for the pups. Hunger would send him in quest of food; and the vast, lighted openness of the prairie, widening his world to the end of sight, would arouse his yearning for companionship.

He came back from one of these hunts, one day, with a gopher in his mouth; and as he turned down the slope, he caught sight of the man on the opposite side of the pool, which

had been steadily shrinking. The Ogre was lifting two pails from the water, when he first saw him; and the water was dripping from them back into the pool. At the very moment that he saw the man, the man saw him; and looking directly at the pup, the monster quickly set down his pails.

The pup was so taken by surprise, so badly frightened, that he dropped his gopher and foolishly ran to his den; and the Ogre watched him as he ran. It was while he lay panting in his lair that the pup realized that he should have gone back up the slope and hidden on the prairie somewhere. He felt that he ought even now to go out again and try to make the prairie; but he was afraid and so hesitated too long a time. When at last he ventured up the passageway, he heard the thump of the man's feet, unmistakably coming toward the den.

He slid back and hid in the farthest corner of the lair, crouching and pressing against the wall, hoping that the wall would protect him. He could hear the beating of his own heart and could feel the tread of the Ogre's feet, relentlessly coming nearer.

Then he heard a peculiar sound which made him think that the man was coming down into the lair. Terrified to the point of confusion, he turned about and began digging at the wall.

It was not that he expected to be able to dig a tunnel by which to escape, in time; but rather because the horror of the situation demanded some action. He felt himself seized as by a hand; and so frightened was he, that when he tried to yelp, no sound came from him.

Then he suddenly realized that he was wet, that the man had poured a bucket of water down the passageway. He was greatly relieved. Evidently the monster himself could not come down.

When the water began pouring down a second time, he was gripped by the fear of being drowned; for it was now up to his shoulders; but the flow stopped; and the water in the lair receded perceptibly. He heard the man walk off; so he crept up the passageway to get out of the mire; but there he lay, afraid to show himself above.

The Ogre came back. Another flood of water poured down. With a loud gurgling roar, it splashed over him and under him, momentarily blinding him and robbing him of his breath; but where he was, he remained until the water was up to his neck. Then he moved a bit higher and thus kept moving, till he was halfway up the passageway. Every time the man ran down to get more water, the water in the den sank a few inches lower. This gave the pup little relief however; for

he now began to feel that the man would soon get the better of him. He tried to make up his mind to rush up, when the Ogre was gone, and run for his life; but he was afraid. Somewhere in his consciousness, confused by fear and the desire to live, there was a vague understanding that the man did not need to pursue him, that he could capture his prey from the distance.

Into the pup's eyes came the glaze of the fear of death. He felt that anything he might try to do in his own defense was futile. When the water came again and reached up to his neck, he remained where he was, trembling helplessly in its cutting coldness. He could hear the man's voice, loud and alarming; but only his eyes blazed reply in the darkness. There was nothing for him to do, but to wait for the worst. Nevertheless, when he heard those awful feet going down the slope again, he thought once more of the possibility of escaping to the plains above. He crept upward an inch at a time, his heart palpitating so hard that it made it difficult for him to breathe.

As he crept, moving on and on until his nose reached the opening, he strained to hear the fading thump. He was sure that the man was not very near. When he crawled out a bit farther, he saw the Ogre going across the

flats toward the hut, moving with its awful stride across the coulee bottom. The pup shrank back and waited till the man was lost in the hollow, between the coulee lip and the hillock upon which the hut stood.

Then he came up on the ledge and shook the water from his fur, shook until the shaking warmed him up. He sat down to gaze at the hut a while to make sure that the Ogre wasn't coming back; and as he sat, there grew in him a sense of victory. The man had done his best to get him and had failed. The Ogre had failed because *he* had resisted. He felt stronger. He was well aware of the need of being very much alert, but he was somewhat less afraid.

With a few hasty looks backward toward the hut, he ran to get his gopher; and picking it up, he climbed to the prairie above where, in the protection of a clump of sage bushes, he sat down to eat.

When he was through with his meal, he selected a sunny spot and there lay down to dry, gazing at the hut which he could see even better from the prairie. But though he could detect nothing movable about it, though there seemed to be no danger whatever from that direction, he did not go back to the den. He did not know where to go. The world seemed all too big and dreary. Now that

there was so much danger hanging over his own home, he found less fear in his mind against the den in the hollow from which the cry of hounds and the cry of the dying mother coyote had banished him, and thither he went.

Trotting along in the slinking fashion of his tribe, guarding with sharp eyes and ears and nose against the multifarious creatures of evil that lurked in the shadows of the rolling plains, he came to slough bed after slough bed, but not to the one he knew. And at last, wet with perspiration, cold and exceedingly weary and uncomfortable, he started back to the coulee.

The evening came down with a penetrating coldness. The wind drove southward gigantic rolls of clouds, portions of which, in the west, were aflame; and the world from its dreary floor to the zenith of its vast dome was saturated with the sadness of cosmic loneliness. The little bit of life, burning with godly passion to be, shone through the eyes of that wretched little body as the light shone through the man's window, and gleam to gleam, the pup crept fearfully back to his burrow.

He found the lair wet and musty, but the water had completely drained. His feet, however, sank into the floor of his den; and disliking the cold wet feeling of mud, he climbed to a drier bit of the passageway and

there lay down to rest. Until the lair had dried, he slept in the passageway, watching constantly and nervously against the man's coming, but watching with less worry each day. This had been his home from before his eyes had opened to this life of fear and hunger, and no other den could mean as much to him.

Then came a very cold dreary autumn day with dark clouds over the sun and many flocks of geese flying southward, filling the air with their warning of cold weather. The pup was resting in the den after a strenuous hunting trip when he was aroused by a peculiar scratching sound along the tunnel and a strong scent of the man. Rushing to the passageway with bared teeth and suppressing the impulse to growl, he heard the sound more clearly. Something was again coming down to him, and this time, it was not water.

Suddenly something sharp and hard struck him on the head. He dropped on his belly with a cry; and locating the thing in the darkness, he seized it with his mouth and bit hard. He could make no impression upon it whatever. At the same time, it cut his gums and was forcing itself toward his throat. He got rid of it as hastily as he could, and rushed to the other end of the lair. There he continued digging the hole in the wall which he had

started when the Ogre had tried to drown him out.

But the barbed wire which the man was twisting and turning down into the den soon reached him, even there. When it touched him on the haunch, he turned in anger and bit at it again; but this was the last time he tried to bite it. He had seized it longways and a pull on the part of the man above, ripped the tender skin of lip and tongue; and the force behind the wire sent it coiling about his head. A frantic movement freed him; and in abject terror, he turned to the wall and hid his head in the hole he was making, remaining in that position no matter what the wire did.

In his insane effort to get into the hole that was hardly big enough for his head, he had his hind legs up forward near his front ones and the twisting wire could only wind round his haunches. It finally got a grip there; and when the man began to pull, the barbs dug right into his skin. Groaning as he struggled, the pup clung to the earth, as best he could; but despite his resistance, he felt himself dragged to the middle of the floor of the den. There he began confusedly to dig. The digging offered so great a resistance, that the wire, tearing his fur as it went, slipped off his haunches.

The Ogre up above made a great noise over



his failure; and the pup rushed once more to his hole, where, pressing his head into the earth, he shut his eyes and waited with maddening anxiety. The wire began coming back again. As soon as he heard it coming, the pup began to dig; and when the wire touched him, he raised his hind legs in another wild attempt to get out of reach. This time the wire slipped from his haunches and caught upon his tail. Thinking he had him now, the man began to pull again. He pulled him clear to the passageway; but there, the pup collected himself and once more dug frantically with his forepaws.

The pain in the bone of his tail was so excruciating, the pup was in too much agony to dig effectively; and so the man dragged him into the passageway. There the pup knew it meant death, and his desperation strengthened him. Suddenly, the pain in his tail bone reaching an unendurable degree, he fell back into the lair. He picked himself up and turned with an angry snarl toward his tail where only a small bleeding bone was left. He licked it hastily; then he ran for the hole he had been digging; and, his body wet with perspiration, his head hot with anguish, his eyes protruding, his tongue hanging out of his mouth, he dug in real earnest.

His claws were not yet used to such labor.

Pebbles and stones hard to dislodge tore them and drew blood; but the pup went on. His life depended upon the tunnel he could dig; and so he dug, piling the earth up behind him, till the hole was big enough for him to get into. Then, unable to dig any longer, his fur and face covered with earth, he lay in his tunnel, listening to the creeping wire as it came in, time after time, twisting and turning and scratching on the walls of the lair. The pile of earth he had raised, digging, turned the wire away from him; and so the Ogre grew tired of his futile effort to get a grip on him again and went away.

There came a time when the pup realized that he was alone, that the tormenting Ogre had gone; but he was too weary, too sick from anguish and loss of blood, to rejoice in his victory. There in his small cramping hole he lay, his tongue out of his mouth, throbbing with the struggle of his body, to survive the chaos in his tormented soul, dumbly questioning the vast spaces of existence for the reason of all this torture, expecting no answer and getting none.

A gigantic desire to live seemed to have been set against a monstrous desire to destroy, that the ghoulish heart of Evil might be thrilled by the eternal display of the two forces opposing each other.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EVANESCENCE OF PAIN

**F**OR several days the pup did not stir from his burrow. Had any one been able to see the little bundle of fur, only the ceaseless throbbing would have given evidence of life within it. There was no desire for food in the pain racked body. But the need of water roused him at times from the stupor into which he had sunk. The desire for water would come gradually, growing stronger as he waited, afraid to go in quest of it; and then when his thirst became less endurable than the fear of the Ogre, he would creep wretchedly from his lair and drag his wounded body down the slope, watching feverishly as he went, and in his weakness afraid of everything.

Every time he returned to his den, he experienced the impulse to go elsewhere, to go where the Ogre would not be apt to come back again. After each very weak attempt, the tremendousness of the task of going over the plains and searching, and his own sickly weakness overcoming the impulse, he would

go back into the lair, and lie down near the hole he had made in the wall, ready to push his painful body into it. A more miserable little coyote had never suffered through life; and yet, at the first faint rally of his energies, the wet, reddish eyes resumed their fearful watch against the death that would have relieved him.

The swelling in the many wounds all over his body abated. The burning sensation gave way and the fever left him. Hunger returned. The fact that the Ogre had not shown himself during all the dark hours of his convalescence was further proof of his victory over him. But the pup was even more afraid of him now than ever; though he had greater faith in his den. When luck came in the hunting, and strength returned with food, the pup had acquired a hazy conviction that pain, however tormenting, was evanescent.

As soon as he was strong enough, he trebled the length of his tunnel; and when any sort of danger drove him down into the lair, he would push his way backward into the tunnel as far as he could go and lie there, knowing that he was safe. So too, when the nights began to be very cold, he would get into that little tunnel because he felt warmer there.

His hair grew longer and covered the scars

of his wounds, and the stub of his tail healed rapidly. The loss of his tail annoyed him in a thousand ways. It took him a long time to get used to being without it; but it did not affect his movements very much and bothered him less each day.

For some time, beginning somewhere in the spaces of the past even before his struggle with the Ogre, he had begun to perceive a subtle change in the world; and when he came out of his convalescence, he found the change even more decided. Instead of being frozen over only in the cold early hours of the day, the pool surface now remained permanently hard. Frost covered the earth thicker every succeeding morning. North winds came with greater frequency, wailing with a sadness that subtly disturbed him. And worse than all this, the gophers, who had amply supplied themselves with stores of grass for the days preceding and following their winter sleep, kept to their burrows; and the pup went more and more hungry every day.

The feeling of loneliness that had been with him, ever since his mother and his sister and brothers had vanished, now gave way entirely to the persistent gnawing of hunger. Snowfalls began coming with increasing frequency, and each snowfall added to the coldness and the desolation that marked the barren hollows.

Strive as the pup would to find it, food kept growing more and more scarce.

He would chase birds when he half knew the utter futility of doing so, driven by hope born of his crazed desire, that some unexpected thing would happen to the bird, so that he might get at it. He would pursue a rabbit for hours, tiring himself to the point of exhaustion, following the rabbit in a wide and endless circle, knowing full well that he could not overtake him, but continuing until the rabbit had vanished from his sight.

This battle against hunger was the worst battle he had yet been called upon to fight; for though its pain was less poignant, its effect was more oppressive. What food he managed to get was not enough to give him strength to hunt a great deal, nor warmth with which to baffle the cold winds. When he went hunting he did not go far, trotting wearily across the plains, a miserable little skeleton covered with a lusterless fur, slinking, wet-eyed and famished.

There came a change. He returned from a long futile chase and sat down upon the ledge, because he could not get himself to go down the lair as hungry as he was. From the gloomy distance above the coulee came a strange crunching sound. It alarmed him. Keeping eyes and ears alert and moving rest-

lessly from end to end of the ledge, holding himself ready to drop into the den opening, he studied the coulee lips; and suddenly he saw the head of the red bull. He hadn't seen the red bull for a long time; and being more timid, because he was weak and hungry, he sidled over nearer to the den opening and watched.

The bull stopped at the top of the slope and looked around. There was the old buffalo trail visible in spots, where the ground was bare. Carefully feeling his way, he started down the incline, placing one foot at a time. Behind him came his retinue of cattle, in single file, all apparently heading for the frozen pool down below.

There was a good deal of slipping here and there in the line, but each managed to right himself; and the herd got down to the pool without any mishap. There they went looking around for some breakable point in the ice, stepping upon it and licking it with their long tongues, from which vapor rose visibly into the air.

A sudden bellow from above roused the pup. Backing hastily toward the den opening, he looked up to see a good sized steer, limping to and fro along the coulee lip, looking down at the cattle as if he were eager to be with them, but evidently afraid to risk the

treacherous slope. For some reason the old buffalo trail did not appeal to him. He looked at it a moment, then limped laboriously away, only to turn, and go back again.

The cattle down below found no spot in the ice they could break and began to walk around to the other side. The steer, in his eagerness to join them, followed them on the prairie above; then suddenly, through a reckless impulse, afraid that they were leaving him, he turned down the slope. He limped down several feet; and coming to a long strip of hard snow, he jumped, evidently hoping to get across it; but his front hoofs struck the most slippery part of the hard snow; and he went down flat on his belly, with a cracking of bones and a horrible groan.

For a moment he remained motionless as he had fallen, his sides heaving rapidly, his large eyes radiating the fear of death. The cattle below heard his groan, saw him lying helplessly, the breath rising from him in clouds of steam; and in the stupid terror of cattle, they began to bellow and to run around and toward him. Seeing them he made a violent effort to get up, only to come crashing down again as soon as he had lifted himself, coming down with such force, that he broke one of his horns. He lay breathing heavily for a long time, before he made another at-



tempt to get up. This time he did not have the strength to raise himself far; but he broke the obstruction of the ice-covered knoll that had been holding him where he was, and helplessly slid down the slope on his side, striking a second knoll and remaining there.

The cattle seemed to understand just what had happened. The instinctive fear of death that was coming about before their eyes sent them running around disorderly. A few acted as if they wanted to get up there to him, but none went. Then, the red bull leading the way, they returned to the buffalo trail, climbed up with great care, and disappeared on the plains above.

The pup was almost mad with excitement. The breath was now coming from the dying steer so slowly that it was no longer visible, and the rapid heaving of the one side that was upward was gradually subsiding. The pup ran to and fro on his ledge a few times; then with sudden impulse started for the motionless heap; but as he got near it, and in the fading light saw the glare of the huge open eyes, he backed away.

So long as there was any light left, the pup kept running toward the carcass and backing away; and then when he was determined to go near enough to sniff at it, he saw two slinking forms in the coulee below and recognized the

grizzly coyote in the lead. Instantly he fled, running as fast as he could to his den, turning there to look.

The old coyote had not taken any notice of him. He went directly to the carcass as if he had been informed of every detail of the joyful event. While the pup sat and shivered with excitement, licking his chops, the coyotes tore the skin open and began their feast; and so near was it, that he could hear the tearing and distinctly see the dark forms in the shadows.

By the time the old fellow had had enough to eat to make him less savage than he might have been, the pup began creeping toward the black mass. A short distance from it, however, he sat down to wait. The old coyote, who had been gorging himself rapidly, stopped long enough to call upon all his tribe to come. His mouth was filled with meat as he howled; but it was a sweet invitation that the pup heard. Along with other forms that began coming out of the secret places of the night, he crept humbly to the carcass. There, he ate so ravenously and so absorbedly that he had no mind for who had come or who was near him.

But when the little stomach had been well filled, and only greed kept him eating, he began to notice those about him and what they

were doing. He found that most of them were still tearing away with that avariciousness they show who have hungered long. There was an awesome gravity about the manner in which they tore at the meat and a fearfulness in the cadence of the rapid tearing that seemed to warn him to mind his own affairs and be glad he was not attacked; yet the recognition of the coyote beside him, so excited him, he could not contain himself.

That recognition bothered him for some time before he dared investigate. A familiar scent, coming out of the past and dragging half clear associations with it, took him from the joy of meat which was beginning to reach over into satiety. He looked about fearfully and turned to his neighbor and sniffed. The raising of a bigger head on the other side sent him back to his own business, but soon he sniffed again.

There were in his memory the fading image of his little sister and that somewhat clearer image of Soft Fur, merged into a sort of composite of the two. Though uncomfortable from having eaten so much after so long a fast, the fact that he had eaten awakened his desire for companionship. After several successive sniffs, Soft Fur sniffed back and soon they were moving off and playing. The pup licked her face; and when she turned to lick him, he

ran off a few paces, indicating his desire to get away from the big coyotes. Several times she stopped playing abruptly and went back to her feeding; then, at last, she ran off a short distance with him.

But the pup wanted her to move still farther away. The atmosphere there, despite the feast, was hostile to him. He was still very young and not strong. There were those who were much stronger than he. He kept urging her to follow him. She for some reason hesitated; and then, out of the shadows, leaped a bigger coyote, leaped toward him and upon him, before he could escape, sinking his fangs into his haunches. The pup got away carrying two painful wounds; and in his lair, he licked them and whined. A little thing and such great forces! What else could he do but whine and hide and wait?

## CHAPTER IX

### THE OGRE AGAIN!

WHILE the coyotes had tolerated the pup on the first night of the feast of the steer, because they had all been too hungry to bother about him, they persecuted him the following night. Something was wrong about a coyote that had no tail. Unfortunately, too, he ventured near Soft Fur again, and her big mate attacked him. His attack centered the attention of the others upon him. They all regarded him with suspicion, but the old grizzly sniffed at the stub of his tail, and instead of contenting himself with the pup's humble efforts to placate him, gave him a savage nip, and sent him howling to his den.

On his ledge, the pup sat down to wait and to wonder. Just why he had been persecuted, he of course did not know. He licked his chops and pierced the shadows with his glistening eyes, waiting impatiently for them to leave. Several times during the night, when his impatience reached the last degree, he did go down toward them; but each time a mere

threatening look from the old grizzly sent him scampering for home.

Until early dawn he was forced to wait, before the gluttons began to depart. Soft Fur and her mate were the last to go; and as they went off she tried to make her companion play with her. She was only a puppy and was much more interested in playing than the coyote who had taken possession of her. She teased him, however, till he played with her; and the pup looked on, changing his position on the ledge, because of the emotions that moved him, yearning to join them, but afraid to approach them. The cuts on his haunches were still raw and sore.

It seems to be necessary, all through the chaotic scheme of things, for some to play and others to look on. Those who profit by injustice twist their tongues to prove it just. If there is such a thing as justice in the universe the pup was one of those living things that did not know of it. He knew only that to suppress his desire was less painful than to go for the satisfaction that those stronger than he denied him.

So he waited till they were gone and then fed, glad to have the food to eat; and while he rested, he played with the blurred visions in his mind till he was too sleepy and then slept.

When the pup woke again, it was still early evening; but the thought of meat and Soft Fur and the rest of his own kind sent him up on the ledge to stretch and yawn and look. He found them all in the coulee greatly excited. They were looking toward the remains of the steer, going round about it, but giving it a wide berth. Only the grizzly fellow went near it, and he picked his way with infinite caution, walking slowly a step at a time, and stopping after each step to sniff carefully before he went farther.

The pup watched them with interest till they ran away; then he stole to the carcass, stopping some distance away and sniffing as they had done. And as he sniffed there slowly came to him from the carcass the subtle scent of the man. The Ogre again!

It was cold. A sharp wind was tearing along from the north, whispering angrily in his ears. Above the slope of the coulee far away in the western side of the sky red streaks of light clouds, like asking hands, stretched across the dome. The white patches of snow lying over the slope exaggerated the cold and the desolation; and the wind, parting his hair, drove into the skin and set him shivering.

But he wanted more meat and he was interested only in knowing whether there was anything abroad or in hiding, near by, that

might do him harm, if he tried to eat. The lesson of the poisoned meat, he had not entirely forgotten. But though there was an odor of the man in the air, the pungent odor of the poison, which would have made the hair on his back bristle, was not there. This odor was no worse than the odor he had often scented in the man's footprints.

Nevertheless, he was ill at ease. The rest of the coyotes had not eaten. They had been afraid to go near the carcass, and the old grizzly coyote had approached it with a care that had been awesome.

He turned his greedy little head from side to side. There was nothing anywhere to break the desolation that gripped the coulee world. Only the grass blades on bare spots and the rose bushes that reached up out of the hardened snow patches waved in the vast emptiness. The red streaks in the west, those pleading, asking hands which had been stretched across the cold blue, faded as with despair.

From the distances came the cry of the coyotes, faint and far away, in a complaining staccato. The pup pricked his ears and listened. If he had been on the verge of overthrowing his caution, here was warning, and he dashed for the safety of his den. In his lair, he curled up and tried to sleep; but



the desire for meat soon raised his head again.

Meat in plenty! He could see it in his mind—spots of red besides the white bones that he had only the night before helped to pick white. How often he had been desperately hungry! How often he had moved across the barren plains, wondering whether the stones or the grass might not prove edible! How often he had eaten the nauseatingly sweet rose seeds! And here was meat, red, delicious meat, hanging to the white bones!

It seemed so stupid to lie there when there was meat to be had and when his memory was laden with long hopeless hours of futile craving for it. He went up above and looked into the cold dark gloom. There was no one, nothing about to worry him. Surely there was no danger in just sniffing at the carcass.

But suddenly he discovered two of the coyotes. They were running along the coulee lip. He could see their dark forms cut clearly against the night sky. A feeling of regret came over him. Why hadn't he eaten when he had a chance? They came all the way over to a point directly above him and he could hear them coming, but he did not wait to see them. He broke down into the den in great haste and there he lay, listening to them as they gave expression to their emo-

tions, watching against their coming down into the den after him, keeping himself ready to back into his little tunnel.

He could hear them, up there, near the dead steer for a long time; and then for a longer time, he listened without hearing them. At last, after a waiting that he could endure no more, he went up to the ledge. They were gone. He was certain of that. There was not a trace of the presence of any living thing in the air. Surely they had eaten and gone, and now it was his time to eat.

He trotted eagerly toward the carcass. To avoid the man's footprints on the snow, he went round to the other side, and came down the slope. He did not even hesitate this time. He went straight for the meat, and he went straight into a trap. From underneath some fresh snow upon which he had stepped, because there he thought the man had not been, came something ferocious, and seized his leg with its jaws.

His desire for meat left him and the desire to be back in his den took possession of him. He was so frightened that he did not even look to see what sort of beast had seized upon him. It might have been the Ogre, himself.

He leaped into the air toward his den. He was pulled back violently and thrown unmercifully to the earth. He leaped again

and again, struggled till he was exhausted, and fell with tongue lolling, panting for breath. The fact that the thing, whatever it was, did not proceed to do worse than it had done from the first, calmed him slightly. He turned to look at it. He bit it angrily and his vigorous bite nearly broke a tooth. For several moments he was afraid to shut his mouth. When the pain left his tooth, however, he tried again, this time biting more carefully.

It took him a long time to learn that no amount of biting would remove the awful thing from his leg. The pain in that leg grew steadily more tormenting. He began to realize that all his efforts, however violent, availed him nothing . . . only gave him more pain. Still, just lying there passively, without offering any resistance, was worse than pain. At least in his angry attempts to free himself, there was something like relief.

It was during a renewed burst of effort that the pup looked up and saw the coyotes returning. From every direction they seemed to come, bringing to him the last measure of endurable agony. They made a circle about him, remaining far enough away to avoid his fate; but he expected them to come nearer and to tear him to shreds.

He ceased struggling and crouched down

on the very trap that smelled of the Ogre, for even his dread of that strange monster was not now more horrible than this dread of his own kind. He gazed with glaring eyes from one to the other, thinking frantically of how he might defend himself against them. But they did not go near him. First one and then another of them—all sitting on their haunches—pointed his muzzle heavenward and yowled.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SECOND COYOTE

THEY called him THE COYOTE when they talked *about* him. When they spoke *to* him, they called him BAILEY. And in such business dealings as he, on very rare occasions, had with any of his scattered neighbors or with the pelt dealer in the village, thirty miles north of his shanty, which involved the exchange of any kind of paper, bearing his name, it was written BAILEY BELLARD.

He lived in a den-like shanty, a short distance east of Blood Indian Coulee, in the center of one of the most desolate areas of Alberta's prairies. The shanty stood on a small hill. East of the shanty and way down at the foot of the hill, cut right into the slope and covered with a straw roof, was his barn. There Bailey kept his cow and the dozen chickens he owned, all the stock that entitled him to the appellation of farmer, which appellation only a stranger to the district ever used.

No one knew anything of the past history

of "The Coyote." Rumor had it that he had spent some time in an insane asylum, but that rumor had never been verified. Bailey spoke little to any one. When he did speak, to exchange the unavoidable greetings that one may offer in a country district such as this, without laying one's self open to gossip, it was usually, when the weather had been fully discussed, upon the subject of crops. Without his knowing it, his discussion of this subject offered a tempting opportunity for wit, when in turn these people would tell of having met him; for as far back as any one could remember, Bailey Bellard had never had a crop, save that of some vegetables which he raised for his own use, which, even at best, was never worthy of discussion.

Of the combination of qualities that made up "The Coyote," as in all the other secluded, quiet, queer individuals without one at least of whom there is not a district on the prairies of middle Canada and the United States, the dominant quality was sensitiveness. Contemptuous of all the laws of civilization, including those that he often slavishly adhered to, and thoroughly uncomfortable in the presence of other people, Bailey never missed a gathering at the little schoolhouse or elsewhere, if he heard about it or saw it announced on the fence post at the cross roads, whether

it was a dance or a card party or just a school meeting. Regular as he was in his attendance at these meetings, he rarely participated in their activities. Though Bailey had his spells of garrulousness, he usually sat in his particular corner of the room, gazed almost always in the same direction; and upon those occasions when he was spoken to, he generally confined his reply to yes and no, qualifying these answers with the shaking of his head.

Folks often expressed the wonder that he came to their gatherings. Thoughtless people attributed his coming to the coffee and cake that was invariably offered; but this was never said in Bailey's hearing, nor did any one really hold it against him. Some were glad to see Bailey eat cake and drink coffee. There was so little he had of his own making and a man, even "the likes of Bailey wants a piece of cake now and then."

Truth was that Bailey had become an accepted part of the prairie district; and if he had failed to attend any one of the local gatherings, there would have been at least half a dozen good women in the neighborhood who would have worried their husbands into going to see what "the poor soul" was doing.

He lived on no one knew exactly what. They knew he had a cow and they knew a great deal more of the cow's history than that

of Bailey himself. During haying time his neighbors would laugh to see Bailey slowly wield his scythe in some wild, secluded slough or go lumbering toward the cave he called a barn with a huge bundle of hay on his back. Invariably at this sight, the witnesses would start a discussion as to whether Bailey's cow would live through the winter should Bailey miscalculate upon its length. And just as invariably there would be hilarious laughter at the conclusion that "The Coyote" was in for plenty of cow carrion "this winter."

Sometimes when Bailey was hard pressed for money, he could be hired for short periods of summer work; but it was generally held that Bailey was infinitely more expert in the setting of a trap than in the wielding of a pitchfork, and only an emergency sent any one to Bailey's hut to ask for assistance.

All this was part of the gossip that never entirely ceased; but though not a word of it was ever said to Bailey himself, Bailey came upon it as through a sixth sense. And what provided merriment to the thoughtless was torment to Bailey, sending him further into the obscure realms of his seclusion, adding conviction to his theory that each man is a strange, remote country unto the other.

Like the coyotes after whom he had been nicknamed, it was said that Bailey changed



clothes but twice a year—in the fall and in the spring. And if it wasn't literally true, it was nearly so. In the spring Bailey wore a khaki shirt, blue denim overalls, heavy farm boots, and a stringy, ageworn cravat—no hat. In the winter he wore an old pair of woolen trousers, putting them on under the overalls, substituted heavy felt boots and rubber top shoes for his leather boots, wore his heavy sheepskin coat and donned the remarkable coyote skin cap that he had made himself. Of some of this property he had a newer counterpart which he kept neatly laid away for the public gatherings that he attended.

But Bailey's clothes were not the most favorite subject for district gossip. In this respect he was not very much different from most of his neighbors; and only those who had white shirts had the audacity ever to speak of Bailey's appearance, even if the others joined in the laughter,—joined cautiously and not over enthusiastically.

In the summer time, Bailey wore a mustache, not always symmetrical and never waxed. In the winter time he wore a beard which he trimmed very carefully before each meeting or dance.

This was Bailey Bellard, "The Coyote" of Blood Indian Coulee, as his neighbors saw him. That back of the deep-set eyes, over-

shadowed by dark, bushy eyebrows, there was a soul, with all the attributes of soul, to yearn and to suffer yearning in vain, no one seemed to suspect. Not one of all the men and women who fought the rigorous wilderness for a living felt that their neighbors understood them. Had one taken any one of them aside and prevailed upon their secret emotions to express themselves, each would have lamented as each human soul the world over laments: "I am not understood. What I really am, no one cares to know." As the world sins against each man, each man sins against his neighbor. Bailey felt the futility of trying to prove himself better than he looked, and so Bailey was a *Coyote*.

Al Dicer's crippled steer had at last slipped on the coulee slope, as Bailey had expected him to do for weeks, and had fallen and broken his neck. This was no concern of Bailey's, because Bailey had no love for Al Dicer, except that breaking his neck so near to Bailey's shanty, the "darn fool" steer had brought the coyote festival near enough to Bailey, the night before, to keep him tossing on his bed, unable to sleep. Just like Al Dicer's anything to live or die in such a way as to torment Bailey. There was no use trying to punish the steer for dying there, but

there was much to be gained in trying to "get even" with the coyotes who had disturbed him. Bailey went soon after breakfast, in his winter clothes—it was unusually cold for that time of the fall—to set his traps, thinking as he went of the pelts he might thus expect and the new winter outfit that they would enable him to buy.

From there, gun in hand, he went north where he had heard that a number of antelopes had been using the secluded section of the coulee for a temporary retreat. Until some time after the noon hour, he tramped northward, unable to get himself to give up and go back home; then, realizing that even if he did get an antelope so far away from his cabin it would hardly be worth the trouble involved in taking it home, he started back.

It was a gloomy day. One could just about make out where the sun was by a slightly brighter spot in the heavy gray, flat-toned mass of cloud that lay, now like a dull stone dome, over the prairies. Bailey was not gloomy. He trudged along at a slow, but steady pace, with his peculiar stride, his eyes brighter when thus alone than when any one was present, his soul droning with a monotonous drone of a sort of contentment. What if the day was gloomy? It made little difference in his life. At the end of the long wind-

ing trail that lay parallel with the coulee lip, was his half-sod hut, where there was plenty of bacon and firewood. At the end of life was death, and in Bailey's philosophy death was rest and cessation of worry.

But late in the short afternoon, when Bailey at last came in sight of his den, he was hungry and very tired. The whining wind that had risen kept growing stronger and sharper; and as it grew, it kept flapping his sheepskin coat which was open in front, and penetrating his clothes, annoying his body that was wet with the perspiration of his exertion.

"Another summer's gone!" muttered Bailey. "That's the way they go—just race along." He laughed right out. "Then *that* time comes an' it's all over, Bailey—all over! An' what have you had for it all! 'sfunny!"

This sudden bit of philosophizing was occasioned by an extraordinary gust of wind that had chilled him and had forced him to stop and remove the mittens from his hands, so that he might button his coat. His moist eyes swept over the dreary landscape. Wherever those eyes looked, there was barrenness and desolation, dead grass and patches of unstirring snow.

There is a certainness in the openness of the prairie that sometimes kills hope. Where trees and hills shut off the view one can fool

himself into believing that round about each obstacle to his vision there is something to strike out for, something to see, something to thrill the yearning soul, something to reward the ardent search; but the prairie gives one no chance to expect futilely. With a sardonic smile it shrieks in the howl of the wind: "Here is all, and that is all there is to it!"

Bailey was not gloomy. He started off again with the same anxious stride as if the body would go faster than the feet would carry. He had taught himself to expect nothing—wherein he was wiser a thousand-fold than they who ridiculed him. He had taught himself the lesson that bacon and firewood could warm the soul and the body, while both endured. And beyond? "I ain't worryin' about what happened to me before my mother brought me here, am I?" Bailey was no liar! He said this, and he meant it, and he lived by it. That anything might at some unusual time or event disturb this philosophy had never occurred to him. He was not the man to worry about what might happen. At this particular moment there was only one desire in his soul—to get to the hut he had left that morning, so that he could smell the coffee and the frying bacon and sit down.

He was striding along rapidly, his eyes, since

he was not hunting, bent on the ground, so as to avoid stepping on some slippery patch of snow. He had come quite near his home. There was the image of it, like a speck moving before the eye, at the periphery of his vision. He saw the sod walls, saw something move near them, saw it for several minutes before he realized with a shock that some one on horseback had just passed from sight by going toward his door, on the other side of the house.

Partly frightened, partly eager to see who it was and glad that somebody, whatever his reasons, had come, he hastened along, his eyes up now. Just as he reached his house, his visitor turned about to go, but seeing him, came back.

It was a woman. Bailey at once realized that it was the new schoolma'am. In spite of his seclusion, he knew every man and every woman in the district so well that a single glance revealed the fact that it was some one he did not know. What stranger woman ever came to the prairies but the schoolma'am? He bowed without saying a word, eyeing her with a fear that made the expression on his face seem most inhospitable.

"I am the new school teacher here," she introduced herself while he nodded by way of reply. "I went out for a long ride and got

lost. Can you tell me how I can get to Al Dicer's place or the schoolhouse—I can of course find my way from there."

"Wa'll," drawled Bailey, trying hard to speak with the firmness of voice that would make him sound as if he were not at all excited by this extraordinary phenomenon, on his domains, "There's no trail across this way, the shortest way; but I guess I c'n walk with y'u a ways, till y'u hit the trail that goes across the coulee an' leads south straight to th' school. From the second hill on the other side of the coulee, you c'n see the schoolhouse."

The schoolma'am was not certain whether she ought to allow him to take the trouble of going with her; but she had been wandering around most of the day; and she was tired and cold and not at all sure of her ability to follow his directions. While she hesitated, she involuntarily rubbed her hands.

"You are cold, Miss," said Bailey. "Perhaps you would come in and warm a bit before we start."

Without waiting for a reply, Bailey opened wide his door and left it open. He was not going to persuade her to enter his home, and he meant not to ask her again. Few of his neighbors ever came into his house; and whatever notions he had in his own mind about his hearth being his palace, he had never de-

ceived himself as to what other people thought about it, especially women.

Grace Withers was not too eager to accept his invitation; but the few moments of standing still had intensified her discomfort; and she was just as unwilling to offend him by showing that she was afraid to accept it.

She jumped from her horse, tied the reins to a board which projected from the door frame and entered hesitatingly, removing her gloves, and remaining near the doorway.

She had seen several of these sod houses in the distance and had wondered how human beings could possibly live in them. A strange feeling came over her as she stood in the doorway, and she was inclined to turn and take to her horse. She felt as if she were entering a musty cave. But as soon as her eyes had become accustomed to the darkness within, she saw that the place was not as uninhabitable as she had thought. It needed a thorough cleaning and it lacked the slightest semblance of order; but Grace Withers, being a woman, she considered it in terms of what might be done with it.

At one end of the oblong floor was a crudely built fireplace. Bailey was on his knees urging a pale yellow flame to exert itself. Below the window toward the right of it was a bed which he had hurriedly covered with a



dull red and very dirty spread. Opposite that, against the other wall stood a table, cluttered with pots and pans and dishes. At one end of the room stood a small, rusty cook stove, covered completely with kettles and bread pans.

Grace Withers had come to the prairies, ostensibly to teach; but really seeking adventure. She was somewhat of an artist and somewhat of a writer; but above all a lover of life. Though she was made uncomfortable by the strangeness of the situation, she was not unconscious of those qualities in it that were thrilling; and she realized that this was an experience she would never forget. Already, in her mind, she was excitedly describing the room to some of the friends she wished were with her then; and she was not overlooking those things she could tell about that would arouse their laughter.

She sat down on the chair he had silently placed for her, near the fire, and extended her hands to warm them. Her penetrating eyes watched Bailey's every move, and as she watched him she lost much of her fear of him. It seemed preposterous to fear a man so obviously afraid as Bailey seemed to be.

As soon as the fire was roaring into the throat of the chimney, Bailey stationed himself at the side of the fire-place, fixed his gaze

upon the flames, and stood motionless and silent, the red light playing on his tragic profile.

She wanted to speak to him, but she found it difficult to choose her words. Whatever suggested itself to her, seemed on second thought, to be so commonplace and trite; and something in the play of light on that peculiar face with its rough grown beard, its pale white skin, and its elusive eyes, aroused in her a feeling of austerity, something like that reverential respect for a force higher than life that overcomes one at the sight of death; and Bailey looked to her like a man that might have lived.

"You have a very nice place," she did say, finally.

"It ain't always dirty like this," he replied.

"I don't see why one couldn't be just as happy," she went on, ignoring his self-reproach, "in a place like this as in a million dollar castle. We think we need a great many things that we are perhaps better off without. In a country like this you realize that."

"You from Noo York?" he ventured to ask.

"Yes."

"An' y'u like it out here, do y'u?" Bailey smiled and shook his head.

"I certainly do. Oh, I don't know that I

should want to live here always; but still I like it, like it very much. One is so much nearer the unadorned beginning of things on this great open prairie. I don't know—out here you seem to get rid of so many of those foolish ideas that people in the big cities have burdened themselves with."

Grace Withers feared that she had talked over his head. She could not tell whether his staring into the flames was an indication of deep thought about what she had said or the lack of it. She quickly changed the subject:

"Your land is on my school district, isn't it?"

"Eh, yes."

"Let's see, your name is?"

"Bailey's my name. Eh, yes, yah, I got a second name too. Wait a minute. B'gad, if I ain't plumb lost it, jes now. Now that's funny, ain't it! Bellard. Bellard. It slipped m'tongue, young woman, if it hadn't! You'll laugh at me, an' I don't blame y'u. 'At's funny; it is! How many times in the last ten years do you think, I heard it used? May be two times. Folks out here call me Bailey. To my face they call me Bailey. Behind my back it's 'The Coyote.' You've prob'ly heard it b' this time."

Grace Withers involuntarily took a deep breath. She had indeed heard it. So this

was "The Coyote!" She became slightly nervous and Bailey noticed it.

"They got lots to say about me," he said bitterly. "Believe me, young woman, you'll live here long enough to know them all; an' you'll say Bailey's wiser'n any of 'em."

"They have nothing bad to say about you, at all," she said, rising from her chair, putting on her gloves, and fixing the wraps about her neck. "Mr. Bellard, I am having a Thanksgiving party, to-night, at the schoolhouse. This is your Thanksgiving Day. Our American Thanksgiving Day comes almost a month later than yours. I am going to make it a real old colonial Thanksgiving party. I thought the people here would like it for a change."

Yes, he thought they ought to like it; but after that his lips closed tight. As he got himself ready to go with her, Grace Withers could see by the expression on his face that he was disappointed by her sudden change of the subject of discussion. He very evidently had wanted to give her his side of the matter.

He did not even look at her as she mounted. Nevertheless, he knew when she was ready and started to walk alongside of her horse.

"If you show me where to go, may be you won't have to come along," she suggested. "I hate to bother you."

"When I get down a ways here, I can show

you," he said. "You don't want to be roamin' around all night."

"No, I should say not," she replied. "I declare I have wandered around to-day for twenty miles or more. I really got worried after a while."

"This is a great country!" he remarked.

"Yes, it is. In spite of all that, I love it. I suppose I was meant for a farmer's daughter. I like the freedom of it. City life worries you so much and worries you all the time. You have to be on guard every moment of the day. You must see to it that your clothes are in style, that everything about you is just proper. It takes a terrible lot of energy to do that. I realize it now more than I ever did. It's just great to live as people do here. They wear anything at all, and do just as they like about everything. But it must be lonesome here in the winter time."

"Yes, it's always lonesome; but a man gets used to that. One gets used to anything and everything. I told the preacher when he was here, three years ago, that I am sure that if I go to hell, I'll get used to that after a while."

Grace Withers laughed enthusiastically. She had heard that witticism before, but she had never heard it in quite the same way and she wanted to make sure that Bailey was aware

of the fact that she appreciated his humor. Bailey on the other hand was thrilled by her laughter. As a lamp dispels the shadows of a dark room, that laugh dispelled the heavy gloom in his soul, gloom that he was so accustomed to that he had ceased to be aware of it. It was a long time since he had tasted of that human relationship that allows such an exchange of pleasantries, and he felt as if he had achieved something of real value. He was encouraged to go on.

"They call me a coyote," he said with a bit of the former laughter hanging on in his voice, "but I understand as much as any of 'em. You see, young woman, what makes them call me a coyote. I never talk to any one about this. I wouldn't even give 'em the satisfaction of knowin' that I know. I am tellin' you because you're not a prairie weed, you see. You can understand. Not only because you are a schoolma'am. There's lots *o'those* that don't know a whole lot. But I can see you have lived some of this life, an' you know what's what. They call me a coyote because I don't sell my soul for a bankbook. Maybe you wouldn't think so, but that's what it is. I've been in civilized countries, just as you see me. An' I know the truth is that they all out here live like coyotes. Now, ain't it so? You know. I know you know. Let them take

your home, the home you live in, in New York, an' let 'em set it down right beside that there palace o' Al Dicer's, and what'll Al Dicer's palace look like? A coyote den! I know what I'm talkin' about. An' that with all his tin can py-ano, he's got. I know music an' I know no musician can play on that py-ano."

"You like music?" she asked in an effort to draw him away from the subject of Al Dicer which was obviously working him up into a passion.

"Yes, I sing. I was born of civilized people; but my mother died when I was young, and my father died later. He weren't no hand to bring up young ones. He had a hard time, I suppose; but I guess he abused me a whole lot, too. I ran away. I ain't never heard from any of 'em, an' I suppose I never will. I ain't had the chance a fellow needs from the start. I came here without a cent and I've lived without it. When I see men workin' ten and twenty years even and livin' in a hovel, with a mor'gij on it at that, I says to myself, 'not for me.' At least I have my peace of mind. I have nothin' worth killin' myself over with work. I have no children to leave money to. When I go, the coyotes can move in here.

"Now you've prob'bly been over a good

bit o' the world. You know that people ain't any better 'an coyotes. When a man gets down everybody gets t'gether in a pack, like wolves t' keep 'im down. Well, there's one thing about gettin' all the way down; an' that is that y'u can't go any further down, an' y'u save yourself the trouble o' worryin' about goin' down.

"I know I ain't got a beautiful house; but I ain't got a mor'gij on it either. I ain't got no macheenry; but I ain't got to worry about them companies, comin' along an' takin' 'em away jes when I need t' use 'em. I have my stony acres, an' nobody on this earth can come an' tell me to get off. I have all summer long to get me enough wood to keep me warm all winter. A few pelts keep me goin' all th' year round. I get somethin' t' read, and when I ain't got books t' read, I read the fire in my fire-place, an' smoke my pipe. I have no hundreds of bushels of wheat; but I don't have to sweat all summer raisin' them; an' then I don't have t' freeze t' death, drivin' thirty miles t' town with them, so's th' elevator man can give me half o' what they're worth, for 'em.

"Say, young woman, now honest, have any of 'em got it better'n me?"

If Grace Withers had been speaking to this strange mixture of animal and man, with the



deliberate purpose of making him think that she felt what she did not feel, she was at this moment so overwhelmed by the truth of what he had said, that she found it hard to choose the words that would, with appropriate strength, express her emotions.

"You are absolutely right," she began. "Really! To think as you do and to live that way must be wonderful! Mr. Bellard, you are a philosopher. Many people have great ideas, but very few of them have the courage to live by them."

Bailey's eyes watered. This was the greatest experience he had ever had. She was the finest human being he had ever talked with. She understood.

They came to the road at the point where it turned down the slope of the coulee. He gave her the necessary directions with a shaky voice; and all the while he was thinking what excuse he might offer for going farther with her. Off in the west the winter sun was red and going down. From the red space where it was destroying the day, streaks of tinted clouds shot asking hands across the sky; and over the darkening prairie brooded an almost tangible sadness. Bailey's head had unconsciously raised itself higher and his eyes, deep-set, almost hidden, glistened with a strange awakening.

"I guess I better go a little farther with you," he said, when they came to the coulee, "an' maybe you better get off, Miss, an' walk your horse down the slope. There are bits o' snow that might make him slip. I don't mind goin' a bit farther. Y'u see, I want to come back the other way there, goin' along the other side o' the coulee, so's I can take a look at the traps I set this mornin'. Maybe I got a coyote in one o' them. They're very clever critters, those coyotes. One get's into a trap, an' th' others won't go near the carcass."

Did you ever catch one alive?"

"They're all alive, when the trap get's them," said Bailey, taking her reins after she had dismounted, and leading the horse down for her.

"And you kill them?" she asked with somewhat of a tremor.

"You have to get their skins," he answered hesitatingly. "But it don't hurt 'em much. One swing o' the club an' it's all over."

At the words, "swing o' the club," Grace Withers shuddered and exclaimed involuntarily, "Oh!"

"It's a downright brutal old world," said Bailey. "No one knows that better'n Bailey. Just plain farmin' is just as brutal. There's brandin' an' all that."

"Yes, I know," said Grace Withers.

"That's one thing I don't like the country for. We in the city who buy meat in packages, don't know what it all means."

"That's the way o' things, Miss, all the way through. God almighty seems to like that sort o' game. He sets the flies eatin' the horses an' cattle, if you don't. The coyote that I club catches a gopher, an' he shakes it by the neck. One thing lives on another. That's the game all the way through. It's just that with people. Look at this: A farmer has bad luck. He can't go it any more, an' he wants to sell out and go away. The other farmers look upon what he's got t'sell with yearnin' eyes; but soon as you ask them what they'll give f'r it, oh, they don't want it at all. Do they think 'at the poor fellow's lost out, an' needs what they can give 'im? Not at all. They play around till they get it for nothin'; and then they shed tears because the poor devil had it bad. I've seen it myself over an' over. It's dog eat coyote an' coyote eat gopher an' man eat everything an' one another."

They had walked up the second slope of the coulee and had continued walking to the hill beyond. From there they could see the early light of Al Dicer's kitchen; and having no further excuse for following her, Bailey turned to go back. Grace Withers mounted

her pony; and asking him to be sure to attend the Thanksgiving party that night, she galloped away; while Bailey, forgetting his traps completely, went home peculiarly disturbed.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DEADWOOD IGNITES

**B**AILEY did not go, as he had said he would, by way of the coulee so as to see whether he had caught a coyote. All the way back to the coulee, he kept turning about to see how far she was. The light was already dull, but against the glowing reds in the western sky, he could see her silhouette. By the time he had gone down one slope and up the other, she had vanished. The red in the sky died out almost completely. The streaks of colored clouds that had stretched, like asking hands, across the skies, had faded. Pale traces only were left of them, like the delusive forms that often remain in the ashes of things that are consumed by fire. By the time he reached his shanty, even these traces were gone. The last rays of daylight had retreated, and Bailey's heart was heavy with a new sadness in the night.

He replenished the fire in the fire-place and sat down to eat what food he had that needed no preparation. There were chores

yet to do; and getting ready as he wanted to get ready then, he knew would take more time than usual. He was bent on fixing himself up to the very best of his ability, but he was already conscious of the futility of doing so. He ridiculed himself for wanting to waste the energy involved; but he went right on making his preparations, just as he had gone on living all his life, pushed along by the inevitable.

Yet when his chores were done and he went at the unusual task of "dolling himself up," an obscure hope was flickering in his soul. Like a child pulling at his knees was this hope, urging him to play with it, to go back to the youth that he had missed. Old dormant desires awoke, persuading him to follow it, while the big, gnarled hand of his wiser self kept pushing it away.

"She's a nice young woman, b'gad," he said to himself as he went digging down into a box under the bed, for his better clothes; and a dozen times after that he repeated it.

"All t'gether different from any of these prairie critters. As different, b'gad, as night is from day. A philosopher, hey! They can't fool Bailey much on what's what. They laugh, the fools; she understands!"

He washed himself with greatest care, shaved off his beard though he knew that his

neighbors would wonder at that . . . this was the time of the year when Bailey ceased shaving . . . brushed his old black Prince Albert, which was now green with age, put on an old white shirt, pulled on his leather boots and brushed them well; and, fussing around for some time, to make sure that things hung well, he closed the door with a bang and muttered to himself as he started away:

"Bailey, y'u're a damned fool!"

It was unusually dark, though some stars were out. A bitter north wind swept along the surface of the prairie, carrying thistles with a mournful swish across the patches of snow, tugging petulantly at Bailey's clothes as, with back bent, he plowed through the dark waves of the night. Far away, at the sharp horizon of the level plains, shone a light in Al Dicer's house; and trudging through the gloom, Bailey kept his eyes upon it. How often he had seen it! How much more it meant to him now! His imagination pictured her, sitting by it, reading . . . perhaps. But in the open prairie night, farm-house lights are deceiving . . . they may be but one mile away or they may be ten miles away. Again and again as he lumbered over the barely visible trail, hills obstructing the view, it would disappear, as if it had gone out, and then reappear again.

Down the hollows and up the hills his peculiar stride carried him; and then, as if it had come out of the earth, the schoolhouse appeared in the distance, its windows sparkling with the reddish light of many kerosene lamps, its surrounding space cluttered with the cold silhouettes of many horses and wagons.

He slackened his pace at the sight. He was almost afraid of that brightness and its indication of life and liveliness, and yet he craved it. There was in it the relief that comes with that sense of protection that companionship gives against the cold immensity of space.

Long before he reached the schoolhouse, he heard the sounds of laughter and loud talking. He entered the little building like one who is not sure he will be admitted, pulled off his fur cap, carefully folded the flaps, laid back the collar of his coat, took his coat off leisurely, threw it upon the heap of clothes piled on one of the school desks at the rear of the room, found a seat in the corner near the stove, sat down, and soon sank into his habitual stolidity.

John Mallor was sitting near by, smoking his pipe, talking to every one that came near him. His reddish hair parted in the middle and pasted down, his mustache as irregular



as his yellow teeth, he grinned as he greeted Bailey and spat into the coal scuttle.

"Well, Bailey," he cried, "we hain't seen you for a long time. Busy, I suppose, with the farm and chores?"

This reference to his farm and chores was a sneer, and Bailey knew it was a sneer. He shot a hasty glance at the man and quickly turned his head back to its former position.

"Every man's busy with his own foolishness," he replied.

When Mallor spoke again, Bailey did not answer him; and Mallor, thinking he had gone too far, got up and walked away.

Bailey's discomfort wore away with the completion of all the perfunctory greetings, and he began to enjoy the warmth of the room and the warmth of life about him. The school desks had been removed from the center of the room and in their place was a long table, made of boards laid across three desks of the same height and covered with tablecloths. At various points on the table, there were bunches of dead leaves which the children had picked in the coulee. On both sides of each of these bunches, stood variegated layer cakes; and between the cakes were huge platters piled mountain high with turkey sandwiches. All shapes and colors of dishes, most of them with tiny rags tied to them and

marked for recognition, made a glistening border around the oblong space of the table.

The women and girls, as variegated in their dress and as odd in shape, moved round the table, setting and resetting things. They fluttered about the room, going most often to the platform upon which the teacher's desk was standing, which platform was literally flooded with packages. And in this bevy of women, Grace Withers glistened like a flower in a background of leaves.

She was exceedingly good to look at, and it was her personality that made her better looking than she really was. There was a radiance about her face that bespoke a sincere interest in every one and that disarmed even those who felt that she was dressed in too great a splendor for a schoolma'am.

Bailey sat in his corner, turning his head now and then, as if by accident, and looking at her, wondering in a sort of half-conscious way, why he was so much interested in her. He was not a fool. He knew that a young woman, lost on the prairie and coming to a bachelor's house for directions, was apt to appear amiable and enthusiastic to a far greater degree than she really was. She had not even noticed him as yet.

By ten o'clock in the evening, every one having arrived who could be expected, Miss

Withers stepped up on the platform back of her desk and asked for attention, which half a dozen young men helped her to get. She explained that in staging an American Thanksgiving she did not mean to introduce American ideas. She had thought that the Americans in the district would especially enjoy it, and that the Canadians might like to see a real American Thanksgiving. Her object was to give the children, at the same time, a lesson in early Colonial History.

While Miss Withers spoke, the children of the school went out into the woodshed, whence they returned, at the ringing of a bell, in various degrees of Colonial likeness. Willie Engledrum was the Colonial Minister. His mother's eyes dilated at his appearance, leading the colonists; but Tom Nelson's mother bit her lips in disappointment; because she was certain that Tom would have made a better looking minister. By the time, however, that poor, frightened Willie neared the end of his painfully stuttered prayer of thanksgiving, remembering now that Tom was very poor in "poetry," she was quite willing to overlook the slight. And when John Nelson, her husband and secretary to the board of trustees was unexpectedly called upon, during the Thanksgiving dinner, for a speech, she dismissed it from her mind.

There had been an energetic scramble for seats about the table so the worthy secretary began his speech by saying:

"Seein' as my neighbors has shown themselves a little too hungry to leave a whole lot for me, if I go on talkin' very much, I will make my speech short, an' . . ."

Here he was interrupted by facetious remarks and hilarious laughter and was forced to repeat the rest of his sentence several times.

"An' I'll sing you a song or two, when I'm through eatin' an' feel better."

Bailey had found a seat beside John Mallor and feeling the need of showing some sort of sociability, he screwed his face into a nervous smile. He centered most of his attention upon his plate which had been piled high by the generous girls who served, and pretended to be interested in all that was being said and done. He ate mechanically and very much too rapidly, helping himself to everything that was passed around. The kind of food Bailey lived on, he had in plenty. This was somewhat different. It was richer and more delicious; and for a change, Bailey liked it very much. But aside from this, eating gave him something normal to do; and feeling that no one paid attention to him, he experienced the last degree of comfort. Sometimes when the laughter was loudest, Bailey pretended to

be laughing too, and sometimes he pretended to be listening. Now and then, he heard and understood what he was hearing; but when the meal was over and the people left the table as excitedly as they had come to it, Bailey could not have repeated a single word of all that had been said.

While the table and chairs were being removed to make room for the dancing, John Nelson sang his two songs; and not a soul was disturbed by the noise of moving chairs. Why should they have been? Hadn't they heard these songs at every gathering for the last ten years? Didn't they know every note of them, every word and every point where John was obliged to strain till his neck and face turned red as a beet?

At one time, just before he knew that John was soon to end his second song, Bailey was seized by a terrible impulse. Why shouldn't he offer to sing? Couldn't he sing better than John a thousand times? His heart began to beat rapidly. The blood pounded at his temples like a conquering army at the gates. Why was he such a fool? He could sing better. Even John Mallor had, without laughing, seriously told him so, many times. But he didn't dare to ask for the privilege. He did want to sing, because, while these ignorant people could not appreciate his

"better" voice, the schoolma'am would. She had said she liked music. Here was something he could do well, if only he had the courage.

The room had not yet been cleared, so there was time for another song. Several names were called out as nominees. Bailey looked at John Mallor. John might suggest him. Perhaps he'd manage to get the courage if John called out his name; but John Mallor, "the idiot," was busy buying a pig from Elmer Holmstead; and Bailey, with a sense of infinite relief, decided that it would be foolish for him to sing, that he might break down just because he wanted to sing well. In the meantime, Charlie Stewart who, Bailey thought, could not sing at all, but who knew how to push himself forward, had offered to sing and was already on the platform, making faces at his audience.

Charlie Stewart was aware of his limitations. He called himself more of a comedian than a musician. He admitted upon discussion, that he did more talking than singing. He averred that one really can't sing a comic song more than a dozen times before all the fun "into it" is old. That necessitates learning new ones much more often than a farmer's life permits. What farmer could not appreciate such logic? So Charlie's shortcomings

were accepted with toleration by all except Bailey.

To Bailey, bad singing was the worst sacrilege. Bailey did not consider himself the greatest singer in the world; but he did consider himself a better singer than Charlie. When Bailey thought of his own singing, he thought more of his "ideal" of song than he thought of his actual voice. However unresponsive his vocal cords might be, his emotions were always there; and Bailey judged his own singing by his emotions.

Charlie's comedy annoyed him almost beyond his endurance, but most of those who stood near him obviously enjoyed it. Bailey laughed with them, but Bailey's laugh was a snicker. It amused him to think that they could enjoy that stale and oft repeated humor. Charlie's singing came to a happy end; and Bailey, finding himself beside John Mallor, who, he knew, was not on friendly terms with Charlie Stewart, the latter having married the "blonde" widow that the former had hoped to marry, knowing that Mallor would agree with him upon anything derogatory he might say against Stewart, said, seriously:

"Now, if it wasn't for Charlie's Scotch brogue, his songs would not be so funny, now would they?"

"They hain't funny, either," replied Mallor. "I was buyin' a pig, Bailey, from Elmer so help me, ef I didn't think one minute, I heard it squealin'."

In spite of their biased criticism of Charlie's musicianship, Charlie loved music and without him most of the district dances would have been dismal failures. There were others who played the harmonica, but none played with Charlie's admirable rhythm. Bailey saw Grace Withers talking to Charlie as the latter was sitting down on the platform beside the teacher's desk, flourishing his sparkling instrument; and from the bottom of his heart he envied him. Why hadn't *he* made himself proficient in the playing of this instrument? Here was a way in which *he* could have ingratiated himself with his neighbors.

A flash of ambition lighted up in Bailey's soul. He would get himself a harmonica or perhaps better a concertina; and he would show these folks what he could do, what musical possibilities there were in him. But by the time he had reached the seat he had chosen, so as to get out of the way of the young "colts" eager to start the dance, that light had gone out.

In his secluded seat, not far from the stove, Bailey sank into a doze, hardly more conscious



of the people about him than they were conscious of him. Only when some hilarious couple struck his protruding feet, was he awakened from his stupor; and then Bailey would anxiously draw in those feet, looking as if he regretted the awakening. Outwardly Bailey had all the symptoms of wakefulness. His eyes roamed round and round the room or from the red hot side of the box stove to the thickly frosted window panes, the upper half of which, melted clear, revealed the darkness out doors. The room, warm and musty with the smell of kerosene and burnt wicks, active humans and food, noisy with the squeaking harmonica, the significant shuffle of many feet, and the drone of indistinguishable voices, was like a weird music box that lulled him to sleep.

Thus he sat, throughout the night, enjoying the feel of fellowship, despite his stupor; and near morning, he was suddenly roused to full consciousness by an abrupt and complete cessation of noise. He looked up alarmedly and saw Grace Withers on the platform beside her desk. Every one was listening to her and smiling.

"Most of us have had a very good time," she was saying. "But I noticed that some of the folks have not danced at all. I am sure that those who haven't danced would like to dance. This has been my little party, and I

should like very much to feel that everybody has had a good time. It is soon going to be daylight and we'll all be going home. We can have one more real good dance. Gladys Barry is going to play the harmonica, so that poor Charlie Stewart can get at least one dance. Let this dance be especially for those who have not danced before. Remember! Every one who has not danced up to now, *must* dance this time!"

There was a very noisy applause, and the older and clumsier citizens of the district began stretching their legs and grinning with anticipation. Grace Withers took charge, and the many couples were soon standing on two long lines across the center of the room. Poor Bailey's heart began to beat fast. He looked about the bustling room, like a cornered animal; then quietly he stole over to the heap of clothes, seized his own, and started for the door.

Grace Withers saw him go. She had not noticed him at all up to that time, nor had she once thought about him. She felt a pang of remorse. He had been exceedingly kind to have walked along with her to show her her way home. She should at least have greeted him. She realized now for the first time that she had seen him many times during the night and that each time he had been sitting in the

same corner with a far-away, tragic look on his face. That look seemed to come back now and admonish her.

This was to be an old-fashioned square dance. The dancers were already arranged in two long lines, leaving an aisle between them across the whole of the room. Grace Withers ran through the aisle, caught Bailey by the sleeve of his coat, just as he was about to go out and dragged him back.

"That's the way!" cried several voices while all the others laughed, "don't let Bailey get away. We have to dance, make him hop too!"

Bailey was bewildered. There was a friendliness in these voices that touched him. He stood obediently and very nervously beside Grace Withers who, holding on to his arm, directed the dance. The warmth and the fragrance of her intoxicated him; he almost reeled. When the excitement in the room caught him up as a wave seizes a bit of discarded rubbish, he moved only as he was moved.

He had forgotten the very little he had ever known about dancing. When he swung his partner, upon order, the feel of her in his arms dizzied him. It was the hardest task he had ever been called upon to do in his life. He was obsessed by the fear that he

was doing wrong, that every one was looking at him and laughing at his clumsiness.

The half hour during which the dance endured was like a whole night of darkness and strife; and yet, when the party broke up, no one regretted the end of it as Bailey did.

There was shouting and laughter and rushing about. Children asleep on benches and desks awoke and added their cries to the hurried farewells. With each opening of the door, a wave of cold air flooded the room. Out doors, the rumbling of wagon wheels as they struck children's playthings in the yard and came down with a crashing, the stamping of horses' hoofs, the horses glad at last after interminable waiting in the cold to start for home, and the shouting of the men to their women and children to come out, temporarily filled the dead prairie spaces with a gladsome animation.

Bailey waited to the last. It was hard for him to leave now. An ineffably beautiful light had suddenly kindled in him; and he vaguely feared that the desolation of his hut would extinguish it. Things in the room were hastily being put back into place; and Bailey, for the first time in all the years that he had lived in the district, proceeded to help. He even exchanged pleasantries with those he was helping.

The dampers in the stove were shut. The red glow, still persisting in the side of the stove, glowed more brilliantly than ever, when the festive hall went dark; and Bailey was seized by an intense wish that he might remain there, yet a while. But he went out behind Grace Withers who was being led away by Al Dicer.

A few more shouts and all this gayety was swallowed up by the endless gloom of the prairies; and Bailey went down the trail, alone. But as he trudged along in the full swing of his peculiar stride, the light in his soul strangely grew brighter. Whatever had been nightmarish about the dance, at the time, was now obscured in his mind, as the smoke of a fire is hidden in the darkness. He saw now, as he walked, only its white hot center, felt over again only the most thrilling point of the experience, as if it had been all of it. His discomfort at the time, his nervousness, his fear, the disgust and despair he had felt with his clumsiness, the wish he had had throughout the dance that it were over, these emotions Bailey lost. But the feel of her fragrant body in his arms, when he had been ordered to swing her around, the touch of her soft hand, the warmth of her breath on his cheek, at one moment, these memories, like precious stones, sparkled in the dusk of his inmost self. There

he meant to keep them buried, never to uncover them for other eyes.

The desire to improve his condition in life, to assume as much more as possible the form of a normal man, not experienced by Bailey in years, had begun to assert itself very vaguely as soon as Bailey had left the school-house. At no time in his hurried march had it reached the definiteness of a plan; but when he came to where the road dropped down the coulee slope, it halted him. The value of a coyote skin had risen to a worthy sum, since Bailey had first begun trapping coyotes for a living. The hope that the traps he had set the night before had a few victims sent him hurriedly along the coulee lip.

There was, not far off, a heap of deadwood with which Al Dicer had intended to bolster up his fallen fence, on the west side of the coulee. With his jack-knife, Bailey hewed a stout club out of one of the thinner sticks and went on toward the traps, swinging it as he went. Suddenly he thought of what Grace Withers had said when he had told her that he clubbed the coyotes to death; and he stopped swinging it.

But Bailey had clubbed too many coyotes to start so late in his career to pity them; and he went along eagerly till he came to where

the very last of the night's shadows were lifting from the carcass of the steer.

"B'gad if I ain't got one!" he cried, accelerating his pace. "A young one!"

As soon as the pup realized that the Ogre had seen him, that trying to hide was useless, he made once more a foolish attempt to get away, dragging the heavy trap to the end of its chain, and there dancing about madly as soon as Bailey started toward him. Bailey gripped his club more firmly. One whack on the head and all that desperate struggle would end, and the foolish fears would vanish with the night.

He stepped after him hastily. He wanted to strike him from behind, while the little beast was struggling and too busy to see the club come down upon him. But the wretched pup swung right around and, moving backward, kept his glistening eyes upon Bailey. Then suddenly Bailey discovered that the creature was without a tail.

"B'gad!" he cried, "ef it ain't the same one 'at I cut up with the barb wire! You mis'erable little devil; I got y'ur tail yet, a-hangin' on my barn door."

Bailey realized that the skin would be worth very little. It would not only be small, but it would look queer without a tail.

"A bob-tailed coyote!" he exclaimed aloud, regarding the pup and laughing; while the pup, seeing that the Ogre was not going toward him, crouched down a moment to ease the pull on his wounded leg. "You're a great lookin' coyote, yoo are. Yes, I bobbed your tail; an' I guess I gave y'u a little trouble a-doin' it, didn't I, Bobby, old boy? It's a hell of a world, now ain't it, little feller? Don't worry, I've had as much pain as ever I gave to anybody else!"

The last thought made Bailey somewhat sad. A wave of self pity broke over him, and with it came floating the image of Grace Withers.

"And you kill them?" He could hear the words as clearly as he saw her face.

"Well, what am I going to do, little coyote? Let you live? Let you *all* live? There'll hardly be room enough for us. You'd soon drive us off the earth. That wouldn't be such a awful thing at that. But we're stronger. I have the club. Ef you had it, you'd be sellin' my skin."

While he spoke, Bailey moved over to the stake; and then, taking hold of the chain, he dragged trap and coyote toward him. When he had him near enough, he placed one foot carefully on the protesting creature's neck, and with his hands removed the trap from the



pup's leg. Lifting it by the nape of the neck, Bailey was amazed by the fact that the pup no longer struggled.

"I'll swear you're as much dog as you are coyote! B'gad, won't the schoolma'am be interested in you! You just act nice, now, and it'll be the better for you."

He pulled a string from his pocket and with it tied up the pup's snout, so that he couldn't bite; then he tied the three legs together, not wanting to hurt him by tying the wounded leg. When he had him quite helpless, he took him under his arm, and started hastily for his shanty.

By the time Bailey had arrived at his cabin, the sun had risen over the prairie horizon. The magic of the prairie dawn was gone; and to Bailey his shanty and all the vast, open world, lay bare and lonely and ugly. The emotions Bailey had experienced left him as the dawn had left the earth; and a more miserable man had never breathed. He threw the pup down almost brutally; and as he looked at the miserable thing struggling vainly to free itself, he mumbled:

"Bailey, you're a damned fool!"

Nevertheless, he solemnly dragged a big box from the barn to the house, and turning it over, placed it against the wall. Then he put a leather strap around the pup's neck, fastened

a chain to it, and dropped him into the box, there removing the string with which his legs were tied. On the box he laid a number of boards and left the pup to his own misery.

He did his chores like a sick man, then returned to the house, built a good fire, sat down in his rocker, and there fell asleep.

## CHAPTER XII

### CONVERGENCE

**I**T is in the mercy of nature that when agonies are piled on beyond a certain point, the whole heap topples over. Pain reaches only a certain strength after which the senses collapse and feel it no more. So, too, fear rises to its last degree and then confusion brings relief.

The pup's resistance to the awful monster when he was being carried to the hut was only reflex. He had no notion whatever of what he was to gain by his struggling. When he was dropped into the big box he crouched down to the wooden floor and only half consciously felt that the terrifying hands of the Ogre were pressing and pulling him and turning him over. It was several minutes after the Ogre had gone before he realized that those hands were not holding him. A few moments of silence convinced him that he was alone, and he got up to make an investigation of things and to see how he might escape.

So dazed had he been with fear that he had not had time to think of his wounded leg;

but an attempt to stand up sent a sharp pain through the upper portion of it; and he fell over. From that time on, he held his limp leg in the air; but during his struggle with the chain and the strap on his neck, he would often forget and throw his weight upon the leg, each time catching himself in time to suppress the impulse to cry out.

The frantic desire to get away, however, did not let him rest. He diligently bit at the chain, moving his aching teeth from link to link, until he was convinced that these painful efforts were futile. Then he tried to kick off the strap around his neck, kicking rapidly with a hind leg. But he finally realized that these lifeless servants of the Ogre were invincible; and he expressed his helplessness in a mad circling round the floor of the box. The monotonous clanking of the chain annoyed him for some time, and then he ceased to be conscious of it.

The Ogre came back. It was terrible to behold him. The strange glare of his yellow face which the pup had often seen shining dully in the distance was thrown upon him like a searchlight; and he saw the frightful eyes fixed upon him like burning shafts about to pierce him. But the Ogre inflicted no pain. He left a bowl of milk, a plate filled with

scraps, and a pan of water, and magnanimously went away.

The pup waited a long while for him to return, keeping as far away from these strangely smelling dishes as he could; but when he was quite certain that the Ogre was not coming back, he sniffed at them. He found the odor not at all unpleasant; but a suddenly rising desire to be back in the open, in the world where he belonged, sent him whirling round the small space; and in his confusion, he stepped into the milk and spilled half of it on the floor; but he hardly noticed that.

Back and forth he limped with undiminished ardor, as if he thought that a thousand repetitions of this useless trip from wall to wall would in some mysterious way set him free. Occasionally he stopped long enough to sniff at the bowl or the plate, but the food he did not touch.

It was not until the following night, that the tormenting desire for water overcame the fear of these ogre-things and he drank. He took only a few licks at first, and went back to his corner; but soon he returned for more; and by morning, the water pan was dry, except for the ice that clung to its sides.

To the soul in captivity, time is the worst

affliction. Only hope can lighten the burden of hours; and hope was denied the pup. The days dragged like weeks and the nights stretched into years. Then light began to break through the clouds that overshadowed his consciousness.

When he could no longer endure his hunger pangs, he tasted the Ogre's food. He found it unexpectedly good; and though he was half afraid of it, he could not resist the desire to take a little of it again and again. The more he took, the more he wanted.

During the first few days, when the Ogre would bring him his food, the pup would wait some time before he dared eat it; and then he began to eat just as soon as the Ogre, leaving it, would go out of sight. So too, when the terrible face of the Ogre appeared at the opening, and the awful hands like ferocious little beasts came into the box to him, the pup would become frantic with fear; and then, after each succeeding one of these experiences, the palpitation of his heart would subside a bit sooner.

The regular coming of food and drink broke up the long hours and made life quite endurable; and when he got so that he could countenance sleep and slept for long periods, life became good again. After all, his freedom had been fraught with as much fear as

his captivity; while food getting had been a thousand times harder. Pain he had experienced in the wilds as frequently and to as torturous a degree. The elimination of hunger from his life made captivity almost better than freedom. Yet, had the box turned over and the strap fallen from his neck, he would have loped away to the refuge of the coulee.

The form of the Ogre, distorted to the pup by the passion of his fear, gradually assumed its normal appearance. The eyes ceased to be shafts of fire, the face lost its yellow glare; and the frightful sound of his mysterious voice lost much of its mystery, began to have a vague meaning.

To Bailey the pup seemed as much afraid now as he had been the first day, but he could see that there had come about a difference in his attitude. When for two days the pup had touched none of the food that he had offered him and Bailey had felt that he was going to die, his interest in him had been almost nullified. He had even become disgusted with the effeminateness in himself that had led him to try this foolish experiment. But when the pup began to eat his food, to betray the desire to have him come with more, Bailey experienced a change of feeling. There is something irresistible to all of us in this taking

of food from our hands by the creatures we have captured. There is in it a tribute to our egoism to which the best of us succumb.

Nevertheless, Bailey was only fattening his coyote for eventual slaughter. He was giving him food and felt that it was only just that he should finally exact payment therefor. The fur of the little thing was not now of great value; but food and rest would make him bigger and the fur sleeker. By Christmas time, he reasoned, the schoolma'am would lose her interest in the pup.

Was she really interested? Four days had gone by, covering the experience of the party and the unforgettable dance with a wall of time and shadow. On Sunday after the party, he had reasoned that it would be ridiculous for him to go to Al Dicer's—Al Dicer an enemy of long standing—call the schoolma'am out and tell her that he had caught a coyote alive. Monday, he reasoned that she was probably still tired from the all night party, and would not want to take the trip that seeing the coyote would involve. All day Tuesday up to four o'clock in the afternoon, he was planning to go to the school to see her and had already dressed himself for the ordeal, when he was taken with an overwhelming sense of the preposterousness of his plot.



In anger he seized his club and went to the big box determined to put the thing out of misery and thereby save himself all this sickening wavering; but when he got to the box and saw the thing crouching in terror against the farthest corner, he flung his club toward the door and started away to the barn.

"It'd be foolish to kill 'im now. Skin ain't worth a damn!"

But that night, sitting by the fire and thinking faster than he had ever thought, he was sorry he had not gone to see Grace Withers, swore that he would go the following day, and cursed his enslaving reticence which he held responsible for his life long loneliness.

Wednesday he decided that he was sick of the bread he had been baking and that it was time he had a change. So he planned to resume buying bread from Mrs. Holmstead. The trail to Holmstead's went by the schoolhouse. Twice a week going for bread, he reasoned, would do him good. It occurred to him that when he used to go to Holmstead's for bread, he would meet people on the road; and he was convinced now, that he used to be much happier, those days. "A man's got t'see his own kind once in a while."

At half past three, Bailey was on his way to Holmstead's, his clumsy boots pounding

the hard frozen trail as fast as his strength could make them go. He did not slacken his pace till he came within sight of the schoolhouse, half a mile away. There he began to walk very slowly and to take out his watch from time to time. A quarter of a mile away, he turned off the trail and went toward a dead rose bush sticking up out of a patch of snow, as if he were interested in something he had seen, surreptitiously keeping an eye on the schoolhouse, till he saw the children leaving it and going down the road. Then he retraced his steps to the trail and went on at a good pace.

He walked past the schoolhouse, as if he were not aware of the existence of that little building. He heard the schoolma'am come out of the door, but he did not turn to greet her. Instead he slackened his pace. He knew that she had gone to get her pony in the shed; and he expected her to be coming along, behind him, very soon.

Almost all of the children had taken the trail going west. Bailey knew that Miss Withers would be going home on his trail; so he continued in the same direction, hoping that nothing had happened to take her somewhere else that afternoon. When he heard the hoof beats of her horse, Bailey became excited; but when he felt that she was already

right behind him, he turned about as if he were surprised to find her there.

"Cold, Miss," he began by way of greeting, at once thrilled by the sight of her smiling face and in despair over the gulf that he realized was between them.

"Yes, it is, Mr. Bellard."

"Ain't it a bit lonesome for you, from New York, out in this dead prairie?"

"Not yet. I am enjoying every minute. When I write and tell my friends how much I like it out here, they tell me they envy me."

Bailey grinned and nodded his head as he trudged along beside the pony, but he made no comment.

"Well, I caught y'u a live coyote!" he said after a while.

"You did!" she cried.

"Yes, I did, an' I'm keepin' 'im till you come to see 'im."

"Oh, how lovely! I shall come the first chance I get. Please, don't kill him. Give him to me. I'll pay you the value of his skin for him."

Bailey was on the verge of presenting the coyote to her; but he realized that in that case, he could not ask her to come to see it; and her interest gave him hope that she would be a frequent visitor.

"Oh, I wouldn't kill him!" he exclaimed vehemently.

"I thought maybe you wouldn't want to bother with him."

"Well, to tell the truth," said Bailey, and he was afraid that she might sense the fact that he was not telling the truth, "I been thinkin' a long, I'd like t' raise one like a pup. This feller I got is a young one—spring litter, I guess."

"It is better, anyway, for *you* to keep him. He'd get tame and I'd get to like him; and then I wouldn't know what to do with him, when I was ready to go home."

"Any time you feel like seein' 'im, jes come along," said Bailey. "My hut's my castle an' the whole world's welcome."

"Thank you. Saturday is the only day that I go visiting. I'm going to see Gladys Barry this Saturday, but the next Saturday I can come to see him."

"Any time at all, Miss," said Bailey.

But he was disappointed. The next Saturday was such a long way off. He had, however, no reason for urging her to make it earlier, so he just trudged along beside the pony who was impatient at being held back.

They came to where their road forked. One branch of it went on to John Mallor, and

Holmstead, beyond; and the other turned to Al Dicer's. With a most ordinary "good day" Bailey took the road to Holmstead's and Grace Withers went her way.

"B'gad, but she does like the country, here!" muttered Bailey, now hurrying down the road. "It's odd. A different woman, that!"

When he came into sight of John Mallor's shanty, he stopped, suddenly inspired by a new idea. Almost a year back, Mallor had tried to induce Bailey to buy some flooring and some shingles which he had not used when he had built his shanty. John Mallor had hoped to win the heart of Mrs. Holmstead's sister, a widow; and he had therefore first planned to build the kind of a two-room house that would enhance his desirability. But the widow married Charlie Stewart; and Mallor accordingly changed his plans, building only a one-room shanty. As a consequence, he had had many shingles and the flooring for an entire room left over.

"I'll build me a decent floor and shingle the walls!" said Bailey to himself as he turned into Mallor's yard. "There's more cold comin' in from that rotten floor o' mine than from anything else. That's right, make it look like a house, 'stead of a hole in th' ground!"

He explained all this to John Mallor, whom he found in his barn, already milking his cows.

"Yes, I got that lumber yet," said Mallor, scrutinizing Bailey, suspiciously, and when the latter was quite apparently disturbed by his scrutiny, he went on with a sudden burst, as if he had only been considering the price, "Y'u c'n have that floorin' an' twelve bundles of shingles, all f'r twenty dollars."

"But I can't give it to y'u at once," said Bailey studying his face.

"'Sall right, Bailey," replied Mallor with a wave of his hand. "As soon's y'u got it, 'll do me."

"How about takin' it all over t'night an' be done with it?"

John did not like the idea of delivering it that very night. When he expressed a wonder that Bailey was in such a hurry, Bailey told him that he wasn't "feelin'" just right, that his rheumatism was bothering him and that he would be especially thankful for a ride home. John Mallor then acquiesced.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MAGIC OF THE HAND

**G**RACE Withers' interest in the coyote pup so enhanced the value of its life that, though Bailey had brought home flooring and shingles to improve the appearance of his own den, he first began to turn the big box into a comfortable kennel for the pup, thinking as he worked:

"If I have t' give him the club, or he dies by himself, I can use this kennel for a dog. I ought t' have a dog!"

He dragged the box away from the house, to the consternation of the pup inside, leaving it a few yards from his door. He took some of the flooring and with it made two doors for the kennel. One he made like a screen door using chicken netting, so that the pup could look out, during the day; and the other he made solid so as to shut out cold winds. When that was done, he took some of the sod that was piled up along the sides of his house, and laid it out around the box, except where the door was, even laying sod all over the top.

When the pup's kennel was done, Bailey brought him food and went to work at his own house.

For days the pup saw the Ogre carrying away the sod from his shanty and heard him hammering shingles to the walls, in place of it. What he might be doing the pup could not know, but the constant hammering distracted him. Every sound was a warning and at every warning he made another futile attempt to get away.

Then as the long dragging days succeeded each other, each day bringing much good food, each day passing without any pain from the Ogre, he got used to the hammering, ceased spending all his time in the mad rush from wall to wall, and learned to take pleasure through his netting door, looking across the miles of prairie, and studying every shadow and every motion. Sometimes he would sit down before the door on his haunches. At other times he would curl up near it in such a way that he could look out. There he would sit or lie for hours and try to bring together the impressions that came to him through eyes and nose with those he carried in his memory, trying to clear away the chaos that hung cloud-like over his understanding.

During the day Bailey's chickens would wander around in the yard, scratching at the



exposed patches of earth or the drifts of snow. Often they would come near his door and stop to look in with first one eye and then the other. The pup watched them with great interest. Sometimes he saw the Ogre walk right through a group of them; and he wondered why they did not fly away, as the ducks used to fly away at his approach.

One day a dog came into the yard, following a man on horseback. The man dismounted and the dog rushed to the kennel at once; but just before he got to it, the Ogre and the other man whistled and called angrily; and the dog, his tail between his legs, crept humbly back toward the man, who gave him a kick. The dog yelped for pain, but he did not run away. When the man stooped down and called softly, the dog wagged his tail and ran joyously to him. Then the dog deliberately sprang up on the man, placing his paws on his chest; and instead of showing anger, the man talked to him in a strangely stirring tone of voice and patted him.

All the pup's conceptions of life seemed to totter. He could only, in his own way, wonder at it all. He wondered why the chickens did not fly away, why the dog clung to the man as if he was a pup with whom he loved to play. It seemed so queer to him that the horse, who had started to walk away, stopped

as soon as the man called to him. These things the pup could not understand; nevertheless, he began to feel a sort of security in his relations to the Ogre, because of them.

Suddenly the strange man took hold of the bridle of the horse and leading him, came with the Ogre to the kennel. The pup sprang away from the door and crouched back into one of the corners. The man stooped and looked in at him. When the dog wanted to sniff at the netting, the man slapped him and drove him off. The pup's heart beat wildly, and his eyes gleamed in terror. But nothing happened. The man and the dog went away, and the Ogre returned to his work.

Every day the pup had some new experience which confirmed his growing conviction that the Ogre was not going to inflict more pain upon him. His wounded leg healed rapidly. The pain left it and in its place came a strong itching, which made his biting it pleasant. He still ran away from the door when the Ogre came with food; but he did not crouch into the corner, nor did his eyes glow so fearfully. Then one time he quite forgot himself and began to eat even before the Ogre had left, stopping only when he suddenly heard his voice.

With an expression on his face that was new to the pup, the Ogre was looking in upon him.

He stopped eating and backed away to the wall of his kennel, licking his chops as he did so. The Ogre spoke. The pup listened to him and watched the motion of his hands and the changing expression on his face. He heard the peculiar ripple of sounds which the man was forever making with his mouth; and he discovered as he listened, that one sound was repeated more often than any other. He did not grasp the one sound clearly in his mind, as yet; but he perceived that it was different from the others, just as the hammer blows in the days of Bailey's working were distinctly different from all the many other noises he heard.

Of the food the Ogre brought him, the pup got to like the milk best. He received three dishes of it a day; but each time, he licked the bowl dry. He did not like the bread that was often thrown into it, but he got to liking it after a while. He would lap up his milk till only the bread was left; and then, to get what milk he tasted in the bread, he would eat the bread.

There came a short period during which the disturbing hammering from the Ogre's den came muffled, and then the hammering ceased. One day the Ogre appeared without food and opened the door. He took hold of the chain and pulling on it, dragged the pup

toward him, repeating the one sound over and over. There was a softness in his voice that was soothing but the pup was afraid just the same. When he felt himself lifted right up to the Ogre and out into the open world, his fear became so great that he bared his teeth; and when the Ogre lowered his hand and seized him by the collar, he turned his muzzle in an effort to bite the hand. The Ogre took a stick with the other hand and rapped him on the nose. The pain so completely humbled him, that he abandoned his attitude of defiance and just shamelessly whined.

The Ogre took his hand away and stood up straight. The pup thought he was now free and started away; but the chain, holding him by the strap around his neck, stopped him so suddenly that it almost broke his neck. While he crouched down, the man walked toward him; and feeling himself free once more, he ran off again, again hurting himself. But the Ogre took him out for some time each day and sometimes several times a day; and so the pup learned to guard against the limitations of the chain.

Always after this daily exercise, he was given an additional meal, and always he returned to his kennel, very hungry. He knew just when the Ogre came to take him out, and

he began to welcome these visits. When the man tried to take hold of him by the neck, instead of showing his teeth, he would just crouch to the ground and look up appealingly. He would remain that way without moving, feeling the hand as it rubbed over his back and head, but making no protest. As soon as the Ogre would rise to his full height, the pup would start away carefully and keep going till he felt he had reached the end of the chain, whereupon he would turn to the side.

He became accustomed to these daily excursions; and the more his fear of the Ogre dulled, the more he enjoyed them. Aside from the pleasure they gave him, they broke up the seeming endlessness of the dragging hours. He always came back to his den feeling better and ravenously hungry; and after he had eaten, he was always so tired that sleeping gave him great pleasure.

One day when he was out with the Ogre for a walk, a wagon appeared and drove by on the trail east of the shanty. A large dog with shaggy hair was following the wagon. The dog came bounding in his direction, apparently bent upon devouring him. In terror the pup rushed toward the Ogre, so completely forgetting himself as to wedge himself in between the Ogre's feet. He was

relieved to see that the dog had stopped a few yards off, afraid to come nearer; but he was trembling.

The Ogre waved his arms and made such a horrifying noise that the pup was almost as much afraid of him; but when he bent down and rubbed his hand over his back, the pup knew that the Ogre's threat was meant entirely for the dog. Then the man stooped again and picked up a stone, and as he did so the dog started away. The Ogre hurled the stone at the fleeing dog and when it struck him, the dog ran faster and yelped as he ran.

A feeling of gratitude came over the pup. When the man lowered once more and stroked his fur, he half closed his eyes. There was a magic in the touch of that hand that banished fear and that was as soothing as the lick of his mother's tongue. There was something in it that transformed the hand itself and even the Ogre. The pup remained motionless when the Ogre had ceased patting him, strangely desirous that he continue to do so. When they went on, he listened with upraised ears to the soft flow of words.

The words were meaningless to him; but the inflections began to take on meaning and in time some of the words stood out distinctly from the rest; and one of these became clearest of all. He learned that the sound "Bob"

applied to him and to nothing else, and pricked his ears every time he heard it, expecting something to happen that would concern him.

There came to the yard, one day, another kind of man. It lacked the two vertical lines that made the Ogre different from the four-footed animals, and its voice was softer and had a more pleasant ring to it. There was a strong sweet scent coming from it, but kindly as it seemed to be, Bob was afraid.

He was taken out of the kennel and forced to endure the rubbing of the stranger's hands. He was worried as to what this visit might mean to him, yet the scent of this stranger and the ring of her voice clung to him long after she had gone.

When the sound of her horse's hoof beats died out in the distance, and a heavy silence fell over the little homestead world, he began to eat the large quantity of food that the Ogre had showered upon him, and that he had been afraid to eat, because the woman was there. He devoured everything that had been given him, and after eating he was heavy and drowsy and soon fell asleep.

He dreamed he was back in the den on the slope of the coulee. Out of the chaotic shadows of sleep came the two vertical lines of the Ogre striding toward him, and the

woman came behind the Ogre. At first he was terribly afraid. He felt the need of running away; yet he couldn't move. He saw the hand of the Ogre, like a flash of soft light, come down upon him. He could feel the warmth of it as it stroked the fur of his back and head, could feel it from his muzzle to his tail.

His fear left him. A soothing essence, like a breeze, rich in the fragrance of wild rose bushes in summer, was in the dusky atmosphere; and voices like the murmur of running water purred in his ears. Throughout his sleep that hand was there rubbing to and fro across his back, filling his soul with a feeling of security and contentment.

Thus the hand that had given him so much agony had redeemed itself by the magic in its delightful touch.



## CHAPTER XIV

### AS THE FEVER BURNED

NEVER had Bailey worked so hard in any one month of his life as he worked during the ten days between the time when Grace Withers promised that she would come to see the coyote and the Saturday when she actually arrived. He tore down three fourths of the walls of sod about his shanty and replaced the turf by shingles. While there was still a bank of sod all around the shanty, some three feet high, the rest of the walls being shingled, the shanty lost its burrow-like appearance.

Having only one room, he was obliged to carry most of his furniture out of doors, while he laid the new floor. He worked from the first peep of dawn till the full darkness of the night. He papered the walls of the interior with newspaper and magazine pages and drove nails into them upon which to hang up orderly, everything that could hang.

But Bailey was not over happy in this labor of love. There were moments when he was happy, but the force that drove him to

this exertion was a fever, and fevers are intermittent. There were periods of exaltation and periods of gloomy depression. There were times when Bailey was delighted with the change that was being wrought by the dormant power of his hands; and there were times when, in unmitigated despair, he would stop in the middle of his work and cry out with disgust:

“Bailey, you’re a dammed fool!”

This feeling of despair had begun growing on him the third day of his undertaking; but because he could not leave his house in a half-finished state, he went on with his work. Saturday morning, the day Grace Withers was to come, there were still many things undone which he had planned to do; but Bailey devoted himself entirely to the removal of all the evidence of his labors. He was afraid now that the transformation he had accomplished would betray the purpose for which it had been done.

Early in the afternoon, he sat down before his fireplace where he had built a roaring fire and came to terms with himself. He had been making a fool of himself, but he was not going to be a fool any more. She might come or she might not come, just as she liked. He might keep the coyote, because it was half dog anyway; and a man

living alone should have a dog of some kind. If it turned out to be worthless as such a companion, he would have a good coyote skin for his troubles by Christmas; for Bob was very perceptibly growing fat and big.

But as the hour for her arrival neared, Bailey renewed his efforts to improve the appearance of his house; and finally brought in several armfuls of wood, which he laid out neatly, near the fireplace. When his caution seemed to him to belie his assumed indifference, he said to himself:

"Well, I ain't goin' to ask her in. Of course, if she's cold an' wants to warm up—that's different; but if she says nothin', I'll say nothin'."

He drilled himself in the behavior he felt he should adopt toward her. There was no doubt in his mind but that the correct attitude was one of indifference. He had never allowed any one to use him "for a door mat" and he wasn't going to allow this woman to do so, even if she was better than any of those he had ever met. Above all, he reasoned, he must not betray any of the deep emotions she had awakened in him. Just why he must hide them, he did not know. He felt vaguely the lurking suspicion that her interest in him was of exactly the same nature as that of her interest in the coyote. He struggled against

admitting that to himself; and his desire to disprove it would invariably bring him to the conviction that she thought more of him than of any of his neighbors.

"Yes, she did now. That's a fact. She did speak to me different from the way she spoke to any of 'em. She does know I understand. She said plainly, 'You are a philosopher, Mr. Bellard.' She meant it too. Why should she say it if she didn't mean it?"

He looked out of his window and down the trail a thousand times. Every time he looked the plains seemed more destitute of life, and Bailey's apathy got a firmer hold upon him. When she came at last, she found the same reticent, furtive individual that had met her the first Saturday when by accident she had come to his hut.

"You have made a new house out of it!" she said still mounted.

Bailey was standing in his doorway, a look of surprise on his face, as if he had forgotten that she was to come.

"Yes," he replied unenthusiastically. "It was time. I've been wantin' to fix things up for the last five years. Mallor he wanted to sell his lumber an' shingles, an' he was after me to buy so long, I thought I might as well do it, an' be done with it. Looks like we're goin' t' have a hard winter!"

"Is that so?" she asked almost alarmed.

He looked at her a moment. It was strange to see her there. She was not of his world at all. The realization of that fact was like a dagger thrust. She had lost none of her charm, he felt. She was now even more amiable; but he was neither comfortable nor happy.

"Wa-ll," he drawled out, looking away over the landscape as if to get his information there, "y'u can't tell. It might not be so bad after all. Might be a cold spell and then warm most o' the winter."

"I suppose," she suggested, "you can't take any chances with the winters out here!"

"That's it. Y'u see that's what made me say, Wa-ll, let'r go, fix the place up, while y'u can."

Bailey had tried to give a plausible excuse for what he feared had struck her as an indication of an amazing activity on his part, an excuse that would conceal the real reason; but he was not at all sure that it had been convincing. He exhausted his arguments and then a disagreeable pause followed.

"You still have the little coyote, have you?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," said Bailey. "An' he's gettin' fat, too. He ain't never had milk before, an' it agrees with him."

Miss Withers dismounted, dropped her reins, and started after Bailey who had unceremoniously walked off to the mound. Her enthusiasm over the little coyote delighted him. He felt, when she fussed over it, that he had risen in her estimation. He said not a word, but smiled as he held on to the collar around Bob's neck, as if it were something commendable which he had done that was being so enthusiastically acclaimed.

Bailey lifted Bob and set him down on the sod that covered the box; and there he held him tight by the neck, so that while she patted him, the coyote would not bite her. To pat him, Grace Withers was obliged to stoop. Utterly unconscious of her nearness to Bailey, she caressed the little thing with her hands which in the moving touched Bailey's hand; and the scent of the perfume Bailey remembered so vividly from the dance touched his soul, like a warm breeze, come with promise from a distant land.

"Will you please hold him like that, while I take his picture?"

She did not wait for a reply, but fixed her camera and stepped away with it. Bailey wanted to protest. Picture taking was not the casual thing to him that it was to her. He would have preferred to look his very best.

All in the moment that it took to take the picture, he imagined her showing it to her friends in New York and their laughing at him. Yet even if she had given him time in which to decide, he certainly could not have found it in his heart to refuse her request, to refuse any request that she might make.

So the picture was taken. She expressed a desire to take another when Bob was tame enough to pose by himself. They talked of pictures and the coyote a while longer; then Bailey went in to get some good food for him. He wanted her to see that he was generous in feeding the little creature. They stood near the den and looked in to see him eat it; But Bob, having run off into a corner, they decided to leave him to himself; and Grace Withers mounted and rode away.

Bailey walked into his house. There he stationed himself at the window and gazed after her till she was out of sight. An ineffable loneliness came over him. Why hadn't he invited her in? Without shame he told himself that he had gone to the tremendous efforts involved in shingling his house and putting in a new floor, all for her sake; and yet she had not even entered the house. There lay beside the fireplace, the heap of wood he had selected, because it would burn

better. He had hoped she would sit there with him and enjoy the blaze. All his efforts had gone to naught.

The room was warm. There was a fire in the cook stove. He sat there looking into the black sooty fireplace, in the very depths of despair. What an empty existence his had been! Was there no hope of any sort, or was death the only relief? The sun was going down rapidly and the fading daylight trickled in through the unwashed window, conveying to him the somber tints of evening, and an oppressive sense of termination.

The struggling bit of fire in the cook stove shone through the cracks in the dark, rusty iron. He got up, took one of the poplar sticks and threw it into the stove. By the time he was back in his rocker, it was already blazing. The light that now broke through the cracks danced in a number of places on the walls and the ceiling. The room seemed to be cozier because of it. The anguish in his soul seemed to lessen and in the darkness, Bailey smiled to himself, and accelerated his rocking. Next time he would be no fool! Next time, he would invite her into the house. There would be no excuse for hesitating then. If she came again, it would be her third time. If she were afraid of him, she would not come. She was coming too; she had said so



plainly. She wanted to take some more pictures.

Well, then, it was up to him, to do what he could for himself between now and next Saturday. He thought of going into the village and buying some things he needed badly for the house. He needed a new tea kettle. He would also buy some good cookies, and he would offer her tea. Over the tea it would be easier to talk. That's all he wanted, just another long talk. It made him feel so much better. It was like growing younger. Incidentally, he might, if it didn't cost too much, buy a flannel shirt and a decent coat to sit in, in the house.

He got up and lighted his lamp. In the light, it occurred to him that it was really unnecessary for him to make that awful trip to town. He could scrub the outside of the tea kettle and she'd drink tea made in it. All kettles look dirty when you use them—how could it be otherwise? For cookies, he could get Mrs. Holmstead to bake some for him.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE CRY OF COYOTES

ALL week long Bailey worked hard, inspired by the hope that Grace Withers would come again the following Saturday. He completed the improvements upon his home in spite of the spasmodic protests he made to himself against the foolishness of his exertions; and when it was all done, he found that the appearance of things gave him a great deal of pleasure. When John Mallor passed by one day, and stopping for a few minutes, expressed his surprise at the change he found, Bailey said in all seriousness:

"Wa-ll, I been thinkin' o' doin' this ever since you offered the floorin' an' shingles to me. I was a bit afraid o' not gettin' the money, but I been wantin' t' do it right along."

Bailey halted when he remembered the real argument he had used to convince Mallor that a man who goes to a "lot o' trouble" uselessly fixing up his home was a fool. He scrutinized his face to see whether he could find a trace of suspicion there; and finding none, he went on to tell him enthusiastically

how many coyotes he had caught recently, promising to pay him for the lumber out of what he hoped to get for the pelts. Mallor said he would stop on his way to town next week, so that he could take the pelts to the dealer for him, and rode away.

Throughout the week, Bailey had taken the keenest interest in his little coyote. He fed him generously, took him out for walks every day and spent considerable energy in his attempts to "train" him; and the result of these attempts was so obvious that Bailey enjoyed it. Saturday morning he was in the best of humor and when three o'clock in the afternoon went by and the prairies around his shanty were frozen solid in their cold loneliness, when the last hope that she might yet come, went, Bailey gave himself over again to complete dejection. Nevertheless, wanting hope, he soon decided that it was possible that she would come on Sunday this time; and Sunday morning he spent teaching Bob to go away to the length of the chain, when he told him to, and to come back again, when he called him.

Sunday afternoon, from three o'clock until sundown, Bailey sat on his door sill and gazed away over the dead, yellow grass of the undulating hills; and when the crimson sadness grew deeper in the west, Bailey experienced

his first desire to cry in decades. He felt as if he had been in a doze these many long years; and that now, this woman, like a strong light shining upon the eyes, had awakened him, awakened him to a realization of the fact that he was a dead man, living in an open grave.

"I must go away!" he cried.

The last trace of light yielded to the sepulchral shadows, and Bailey entered his dreary home, drearier now with all its improvements than it had ever been before, inspired by the thought of going away.

All through the making of his evening meal, his brain throbbed with the rapid thoughts that this inspiration had started; but when after his meal he sat down to smoke his old pipe, before the open fire, he came to the conclusion that going away was a plan much more easily thought about than executed. He recalled all the details he could of the life he had led before he had turned into a recluse. He remembered clearly how much of a struggle life had been. How much harder that struggle would be now, after so many years of living all by himself. What a joy his life could be to him, if he could get a woman like Grace Withers, who thought so much as he did about things, to live with him! What wouldn't he do for her?

"God!" he cried. "Why can't anything the like o' that be possible for me? What have I done that makes me worse than all other men?"

And in his somewhat happier moods, Bailey would console himself:

"But she did say she was a-comin' again. I'll be more friendly. I'll ask her in. Why not? We'll talk . . . we'll see. . . ."

Throughout the following week, Bailey found consolation in that promise. When another Saturday came and went and Sunday turned up bright and sunny, after a night of sleeplessness, during which he was several times on the verge of going out and giving Bob a beating for his fiendish howling, which had helped to keep him awake, Bailey swore that if she did not come that day, he never wanted to see her again.

"What do I want of her, anyway?" he cried that night by the fire, after he had poured out of his soul a stream of vituperation, with which he had hoped to destroy his interest in her. "She talks to me nice, as she talks to the coyote. What have I got to do with her? She'd get them to send me to the mad house, if she knew that I am a-thinkin' that way. God, why was I made so?"

"Just the same, I got to quit this nonsense or I will go crazy. They all think I'm crazy

anyway. But damn them, I won't go crazy. Damn her! I am done with her. No more! No, sir, no more! Not once will I think of her!"

He thought of the time, years ago, when Al Dicer and he had had a fight. They had been arguing for some time, when Bailey, forgetting himself, had said:

"Y'u're crazy, Al Dicer, 'at's all there's to it."

As soon as the words had been spoken, Bailey had regretted them, nevertheless Al Dicer had been so incensed that he had retorted:

"*I* am crazy! You tell me *I* am crazy when the whole country round here knows *you* for a crazy man. Is there a man in this neighborhood that doesn't call you, 'crazy Bailey,' when he talks about you?"

They had been arguing in the middle of the road, where they had met. Bailey had become so bitterly impassioned that if he had had a gun he might have shot Dicer. Dicer had been on horseback, and he had been on foot. Realizing his inability to do or say anything, he had turned and strode off as rapidly as he could. For months these burning words had tortured him. Time had softened the sting of them, only because it had buried them under other worries. Now they

came back to the surface with renewed strength.

"He's been tellin' her all that, that's what it is!" he cried, when still another week end went by. "He's been makin' her afraid of me. I'll show him whom he's dealin' with. He can't go on forever makin' everybody afraid of me."

All of that awful Sunday night, Bailey sat up feeding the fire, trying to come to some decision as to what he ought to do. At one moment he was determined to kill Dicer without giving him a chance to explain himself; at another moment he thought it best and more satisfying to go to Dicer and confront him with the charge, first determine whether it really was so. As he thought this over, it all occurred to him as mere madness; and then he decided to say nothing at all, to go on living his life as he had lived it. When, however, that nagging pain at his heart came back, he reasoned that perhaps Grace Withers had had many things to take up her time, that she might come the next Saturday and that if she did, he would ask her for things to read. This he felt would give him a good excuse for going to see her regularly. Until Saturday he would wait; and then he would do something to end the unendurable tension. If she didn't come this Saturday, he would know that she

meant not to come any more. He would know that Dicer had warned her not to go.

"All right then, old man Dicer. I might be what you say and more; but all I have to do is to place my little finger on the trigger, an' you are as much of a coyote as I am. An' they would give no more for your skin then, than they'd give for mine. Just watch out, Damn your soul! . . . I don't care what happens to me."

Bailey waited, as he had promised himself to wait. When John Mallor came by and offered to take what coyote skins Bailey might want to send to town, he found Bailey as amiable as ever. Not an expression on his face betrayed the slightest trace of what he had endured.

Every day he took Bob out on long walks patiently teaching him to follow, preparing him for the time when he expected him to run along behind him like a dog.

He was very glad now that he had Bob to talk to and to bother with. Even if he had possessed anything that he hadn't read several times over, he would not have had the peace of mind to read. His work and his hunting helped him very little; but the obvious growth in Bob, his steady learning and the show of intelligence that daily became more apparent,



fascinated Bailey; and for short periods, at least, relieved him from his obsession.

Saturday afternoon, Bailey fastened the long string to Bob's collar and with him went to meet Miss Withers. She was coming that day, he was certain. He was certain till he had crossed the coulee and reached the hill top beyond. From there he could see Dicer's buildings, like mushrooms on the distant prairie skyline. But the trail was destitute. Not even a thistle rolled across the flatness to give him a hopeful illusion. All the bitterness of his heart reached the surface, and Bailey started back home so fast that when Bob, not knowing what to make of his hurry, crossed his path, Bailey almost stumbled over the string.

Still Bailey could not relinquish hope. "She might a' gone somewhere else an' come by the east trail." But this thought made him hurry all the more. When he came within sight of the shanty he realized that that vague hope was groundless. He had pictured in his mind a horse and rider beside his door. When he came within sight of his house, the door shut, and his vision of it unobstructed, it looked to him like an eyelid, closed in death.

It was already beginning to grow dark.

There was no sunset for the clouds in the west were heavy. There was only gloom and emptiness. Bailey was distracted. The promise and the threat that he had made seemed to be so colossal, the thought of it dizzied him. Murder! Bailey had never had murder in his heart. Yet why should he endure such persecution? Persecution it was, what else could it be?

He sat down on the door sill without opening the door. He wanted to rest and to get rid of the dizzy feeling in his head as well as to try to think it over. In his hand he held the long string and Bob pulled at it. Bob wanted to go on. He had enjoyed the walk. But Bailey was impatient. He jerked him back with all his might, and the frightened pup stopped pulling a moment only to start again the next moment. Several times Bailey jerked him back, each time with more anger. Then entirely out of patience he picked up a bone lying near his foot and hurled it at Bob striking him right in the middle of the back. With a cry of pain the frightened animal leaped into the air, breaking the wire that held the snap to the rope.

When Bailey realized that the wire had broken, he lost his head. Instead of calmly walking toward Bob and talking to him in a way that would not frighten him he started

for him so eagerly that Bob thought he was going to kill him. Instead of waiting for Bailey, he ran away. Bailey called frantically, but his voice was not the least reassuring to Bob.

He was not in the mood to "coddle" any coyote. "After all I've done for you, damn you," he shouted, gesticulating angrily. "Go to the devil an' don't come near the place again." He stopped talking suddenly, turned about and almost ran into his house. There he loaded his pockets with shells, cleaned his gun, hastily, and came out again.

Cursing and swearing with all the bitterness that was overflowing his heart, he started toward the coulee. There was no clear decision moving him. What he should have done had he really come upon Bob or Dicer would have depended entirely upon the emotions arising at the particular moment. He was striding along, driven by an insane desire to be on the go and going rapidly. The motion seemed to give him a small amount of relief.

He came to the coulee, walked down the slope, crossed the flats, went up the other slope and continued even when the full darkness of the night made seeing difficult. He felt as he went, when his other thoughts gave way to these for a moment, that Bob was in the

darkness but a short distance ahead of him, mocking him in his misery.

"You can go to the devil!" he shouted several times but after each time he continued his search with more earnestness. Bob had been a sort of relationship between himself and Grace Withers. He must find him!

He went south along the bottom of the coulee, after hours of useless searching and calling and swearing and threatening, and came upon the trail where it crossed the coulee. He could not bear the thought of returning to his shanty. It seemed to him that his whole world had been shattered, and that Dicer was responsible for all his misery. There wasn't the slightest doubt in his mind any more about it. Dicer had told her not to go to the house of "crazy Bailey." He could imagine clearly Dicer's voice and the words he had used. He could hear in his mind, Dicer warning her not to go; and it incensed him so, that his heart almost snapped for anger. From the time he reached the crest of the hill, west of the coulee, from where he could make out Dicer's house, until he came into Dicer's yard, he did not remove his eyes from the glimmering lights in the windows.

It was a cold night. In the west the great dome was thick with angry, passing

clouds; but overhead the sky was perfectly clear; and the stars glistened with a cold and penetrating laughter. In the north, faint traces of pearly light, fluttered across the sky, hardly perceptible, and yet indicating a hidden power of infinite magnitude.

There was a brilliant light in the front room of Dicer's house, and clumps of shadows distorted the usual shadowy forms of the farm buildings. He knew as soon as he neared, that there was some sort of a gathering there about which he had heard nothing. He was afraid that some one else might be coming along; so he left the trail and hurried around on a wide semi-circle to approach the house from behind the granaries on the other side.

The dogs were barking furiously. There seemed to be a host of them. When he finally got under cover of the granaries, he called softly to Dicer's dog, Rowley. Rowley knew him and a single pat quieted him. The other dogs who had come with their various masters seemed to feel that this was Rowley's affair; and since Rowley ceased barking, they stopped too.

Bailey felt his way along the side of one of the granaries till he reached the corner nearest the house. There he stopped. He could look right into the parlor; and so brightly lighted was the room, that he could dis-

tinguish without difficulty, every one who came near the window.

There were not many people there. He recognized all of those that he saw. Grace Withers flashed by several times; and then she sat down at a little table to the side. Charlie Stewart took the seat opposite her, and began shuffling a deck of cards.

Fortunately it was not Al Dicer who had sat down to play with her. Bailey had no definite grievance against Charlie Stewart. Instead of becoming angry at Charlie, he envied him.

He could not see her very well. Only when she turned to talk to some one at her right, did he see her full face. There was upon it a smile of supreme contentment that hurt him. Bereft as he was of everything that could have made his life worth living, there was not a trace on those white features of the want of anything. Never, since he had met her, had he been so certain that he meant nothing to her, as he was that moment. If he had had any definite purpose in coming to Dicer's, he would have lost it, in the confusion that fell upon him. Only one fact rose clear above that confusion . . . this was the vision of a world to which he did not belong.

Overcome by a sense of shame Bailey turned and plunged into the sea of shadow that

stretched away from back of the granary into infinity. For half an hour he strided on rapidly toward home. Straight north he went for some time, then swerved east; and when he came to the hill west of the coulee, he turned to look back. In the far night twinkled the light in Dicer's house. To see that tiny light in the distance was almost like seeing the man, face to face . . . it meant Dicer to him. All the poisonous hatred in his soul came up to torment him all over again. He stopped. He did not question the justice of his charges against Dicer. His reason was not in control of his mind. The grievance was there like an ache in his heart and he wanted to assuage it, somehow.

He started off again toward his shanty, not because he had decided to go home, but rather through habit—his feet were more used to going homeward. But the passion in his soul was steadily rising as he went.

He was going rapidly toward the coulee. He could see the blacker line of shadow on the black prairie floor. Intent upon the shadow of the coulee, he stepped on a patch of snow and went down with a thud. He lost consciousness for a moment. It returned at once. He was dizzy and a feeling of nausea was in his stomach.

His fur cap had fallen from his head, and

his head felt cold and wet. He wiped his forehead with one hand and stretched out the other to get his gun; and just as he touched the cold metal of the barrel, there broke into the still night air the distant cry of coyotes.

"Crazy man! They'll be eatin' y'u," he cried and hastily got to his feet.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE OGRE TURNS GOD

**T**HE sense of security that had changed Bob's life and appearance burst in the dusk of that early evening. The Ogre had gone back to his former maliciousness, and Bob fled with the feeling of one who had all along feared and suspected that that would happen. It was as if he only now became conscious of the fact that he had always been suspicious of him.

True, the Ogre, in the early period of his captivity, had ceased to give pain with his every appearance. He had brought him food regularly and with a generosity that Bob's own mother had never shown. His voice had become soothing, but it had also been threatening at times. His hand had acquired the assuaging quality of his mother's tongue; but in the hand in which there had been the feel of love, there had still been the power to give pain. The Ogre had still been the Ogre and a thousand little incidents had kept the coyote aware of this. In the voice

that with its weird cadence thrilled him, in the voice that accompanied the Ogre's many acts of kindness, there were occasional rises in pitch that were terrifying. He had learned all this as well in the Ogre's relations with other creatures of the little homestead.

When Bob had become tame enough to accompany the Ogre on long walks, to behave himself at the end of the chain or rope as the Ogre wanted him to behave, the Ogre had begun to take him with him to the barn when he went to milk the cow. While the Ogre used to milk, Bob would sit on his haunches and watch the streams of white liquid pouring into the pail. He would watch eagerly, licking his chops, for Bob had learned to like the milk; and the Ogre never neglected to fill the tin can from which he lapped it.

One day the cow, switching her tail, had struck the Ogre in the head. Bob had seen the Ogre rise and had heard the threat in his voice. He had been afraid and had held himself ready to run. The Ogre had beat her with the stool which he had held in his hand. The cow had been unable to move her head; but the rest of her body had moved frantically from side to side; and a pathetic, fearful murmur had come from her closed mouth.

Bob did not forget for a long time the

sound he heard as that stool had struck the cow's body, nor did he forget the terror in her large eyes, nor the futile pulling at the short rope about her horns.

When the Ogre had sat down again to the milking, the cow had submitted with the obvious desire not to offend him any more. When she had moved a leg or her tail, after that, it had been with perceptible caution; and her large, fearful eyes would turn backward to see whether there was more pain coming. And Bob, sitting at the end of his rope, as far out of reach as he could, had quivered with awe.

If a chicken came too close while the Ogre milked, he would strike it with his hand, and the chicken would hurry away with loud cries. Once when a hen had brushed against Bob, and for the fun of it, he had snapped at her tail, pulling out a few feathers, the Ogre had kicked him. So Bob was wary; and always, as far as he could understand, he was obedient.

He had been out upon a long walk with the Ogre. The smell of the open prairie, far from the odors of the homestead, had filled him with a great desire to go on, to sniff at rose bushes where rabbits might be in hiding. He was a big coyote now. He felt very big. He had plenty to eat and he was strong. He

was less afraid too; and the prairie now seemed to abound with hidden wonders to see, to smell and to experience.

After returning from the walk that had been all too short, the Ogre sat down on the door sill. Bob wanted to go on. He pulled at the rope meaning thereby to urge the Ogre to get up and go with him. But suddenly he heard the loudness that he feared in the Ogre's voice; and just when he meant to cease pulling, he felt the impact of the hard bone on his back. He was so frightened that he sprang high into the air. When he landed on the ground, he felt that the pull of the rope had given. He was free!

He moved off a short distance, sat down, and trembled. The Ogre seemed to have risen like a giant out of the earth. He seemed to have grown many feet taller. He came toward him rapidly and in his voice there was something more terrible than anything Bob had ever heard. When Bob out of fear moved off a bit farther, the voice became even more terrible; so he turned and fled.

He ran straight to the coulee, down the first slope, and across the flats. On the other side he sat down to look about. The world seemed stranger now than it had been when the Ogre was with him. He was not com-

fortable, and he did not know what he ought to do.

There was still some light. He saw his old den and the rose bush behind it, but he waited a moment to see whether the Ogre would be coming after him. He began to feel a desire to be back on the homestead yard. There came into his mind the feel of the Ogre's warm hand. He got up, stretched, looked around, and was about to start back to the hut, when he saw the form of the Ogre appear in the dusk above the coulee lip. It seemed to have grown still bigger. It seemed to be reaching into the very sky. Bob was horrified. Something dreadful had happened to the world. As he loped toward his den, he heard faintly the man's voice; but he was afraid of it.

He pushed himself into the den opening, backward, the old wildness now glowing in his eyes; and sniffing to assure himself that there was nothing to guard against there, he remained near the opening, so that he could see what the Ogre was going to do.

There in the distant darkness was the hut, no longer as he knew it, but as he had known it—a shadow of evil, to be feared and shunned. The Ogre was down in the coulee, his vertical form fast blending with the blackness of the descending night.

He heard the Ogre call. At times the voice seemed to have returned to its former normal pleasantness. Several times he moved out from the den opening with the impulse to go to him; but each time the roof of the shanty and its chimney outlined against the sky dispelled the impulse.

The Ogre was soon lost in a turn in the coulee; and the night rapidly deepened. Bob first went down into the lair, then finding the den too confining, he went out again and up the slope to the prairie above. There he felt much better. Overhead the night was clear. In the north a faint pearly light was fluttering across the sky. The darkness was most protecting, and yet there was light enough for him to see. Trotting made him warm, and the better circulation of his blood made him happy. This was what he had been craving for.

He glided along with a carefree easy lope, stopping often to sniff at a rock or a bit of snow, sometimes growling for the mere pleasure of growling. It made him feel stronger. It made him more pleased with himself.

There was in his mind a half remembered image of a slough and a den and a group of playful pups. As he loped in a certain direction, that impression grew more and more dis-

ting. He saw the blurred form of one of these pups and half felt the scent of her and the softness of her fur. He came to a slough in a hollow. Completely around it, he went; but he saw no den. There was a white patch of ice in the center. He trotted to it carefully and stepped upon it. A coldness exuded from it. He licked it with his tongue. It was cold and sharp, but he got water from it, and he was thirsty.

The world was dead and still. Not a living thing anywhere to challenge his possession of it. Just for the sheer delight in the exercise of his powers, he started across the frozen pond. He slipped on the ice once or twice, but he trotted on; and when he got to the other side, he loped away at his greatest speed—so happy was he.

Mile upon mile he covered, and then on the crest of a hill he sat down. Before him in the distance gleamed a bright reddish light, and as he listened he heard the barking of several dogs. He did not like the sound. He was strong and healthy and swift, but he did not court trouble; and in the barking of these dogs there was a threat of trouble.

He loped back a mile, came round to the other side of that house and sniffed. Then after a long silence when the dogs began barking again, he decided that he had better go

back in the direction whence he had come; and he went leisurely.

He came to the coulee about a half mile north of his den. He intended to go down into the coulee and to explore the bottom from there to his den; but before starting, he sat down to sniff the air. He pointed his muzzle southward, because in that direction the Ogre had vanished. He soon turned it to the opposite direction, for while there was not a trace of the Ogre in the air, there was the odor of carrion and coyotes coming from the north.

His heart began to beat rapidly with the intensity of his interest. He was so anxious to meet his own kind, he could not go fast enough; and yet he was afraid. How would they respond to him? There was a turn in the coulee at that point. Instead of following the turn at the bottom, he climbed up to the top, crossed the arm of prairie that extended into the coulee, and went halfway down the slope on the other side. He was at first so terrified by what he saw that he hid back of a stone.

On a hard drift of snow, lay the carcass of a horse; and about it capered four coyotes, tearing at the flesh and gorging themselves with it. For a while he lay there, belly pressed to earth, shivering with excitement; then, unable to wait any longer, staking his life



upon his newly acquired strength, he began very slowly to move toward them. Memories of a similar experience haunted his excited mind. The sensations they brought seemed to push on and hold him back at the same time. The stronger prevailed and he began to feel that if he got to them and joined the festivity, he would be accepted as one of them. Now that he had been driven from the Ogre's hut, it was among them that he belonged.

What encouraged him most was the fact that though he was certain that they knew of his presence, they paid no heed to him. He moved on a few feet, then sat down upon his haunches and licked his chops. The smell of them was excessive now. It was like a smell that one likes, but that is so strong that it nauseates. The nearer sound of the tearing of meat and the clashing of teeth rekindled his worst dread; and yet he could not go away. If he could make peace with them, he could run and play with them.

So he moved on toward them, stretching his muzzle and sniffing questioningly; and then he stopped abruptly. He recognized the grizzly old coyote whom he had feared ever since he could remember. There he was, ugly and ferocious-looking as always; but somehow neither he nor the rest of them were quite as big as they used to appear to him.

He scanned the surrounding spaces anxiously. To the right of him was the coulee reaching out around the arm of the prairie and the slope of the bend. In case of attack, he could run along the coulee bottom to the den.

While Bob had turned his head to make sure of his position the old coyote had sat down on his haunches. With muzzle raised, he sent out a penetrating yowl that made Bob shiver with awe. Emotions that blended sound and space and time took possession of Bob's mind, and he felt as if he had been transported back to his puppy days.

Above the opposite coulee rim, the northern lights were fluttering across the sky. The old grizzly's shrill, *yap, yapping*, seemed to follow that flutter with a mysterious unison. When the lights had zigzagged over the lower portion of the sky, from east to west, dying momentarily in the west, the big wolf gurgled the last of his guttural sounds, and turned his head menacingly toward Bob.

The rest of the coyotes started slowly toward him. Bob was half inclined to turn and flee; and yet, his desire for companionship was now stronger than ever. He felt that if he held his own, they would only sniff at him and admit him to the pack.

By the time they had come up quite near, however, he was overwhelmed by fear of them. He was almost sure now that they were not friendly. Their manner of approach was unmistakably hostile. But he controlled himself. He knew that he must pretend to be unafraid, that to betray his fear would be fatal. So, though he yearned to play with them, he bared his teeth; and deep down in his throat, he growled a rumbling, fearful, challenging growl.

The grizzled old fellow came first, and the other two moved along behind him and to the side. A few paces away, the old fellow stopped, his head level with his body, his tail almost stiff behind him. At the same time two of the others went off to each side as if they meant to surround the intruder.

Bob was up on his feet. Except for the tail which he lacked, he assumed the same position as that of the grizzled coyote. He was ready to defend his life. There was still a bit of hope in him that he would not be attacked. His unsteady glance had brought him a feeling of recognition. He was reminded vaguely of a moment's happy play-time and the feel of Soft Fur. She was sitting down a few paces off to watch what was going to happen. He had not time to place

her. She blurred in his mind. His eyes were centered now upon the wolf in front of him.

Man with all his reason and his laws, man with his finer love and his progress, fails so often in his deliberate efforts to be just; it were asking more of coyotes than of men to have expected justice from these crudely made life things, to whom existence is an unreasonable hunger and life the endless battle to appease it. Bob wore a collar! He had no tail! The smell of man that clung to him was offensive. "Enemy!" cried the smell, in their savage nostrils; and the blood that beat through their savage hearts cried, "Kill!"

With a sudden rush the grizzly old fellow made an attempt to get at his throat. A move of defense drove the old fellow's muzzle down and his fangs tore a burning crescent on Bob's shoulder. With the first pang went Bob's last hope of peace. It was war to the last drop. Into his wild brain, dark with the fear of death, came the lust for blood and into his teeth a desire to rip and to tear.

The other two went at him from behind. He felt the fangs at his haunch, and he leaped into the air, coming down full force upon the grizzled fellow who, hoping to get a grip at Bob's throat, seized the skin of his belly instead. But as soon as he felt Bob's fangs on

the bone of his back, he let go and made an attempt to throw him off. Then, suddenly, all three of them went rolling down the slope, biting, snarling, and yelping.

Below, the battle went on with greater savagery, for every fang had tasted blood; but it became so confused that one of his enemies bit the other, and those two started a fight by themselves. For a while Bob had only his grizzly antagonist against him; and as he fought, he kept pulling away, when he could, realizing that the farther off he led the old fellow from the others, the better were his chances of escape.

But Bob was losing rapidly, even though he warded off every blow at his throat, and even though the taste of the old coyote's blood was in his mouth. He was not as savage as his enemy nor as wise. The constant fear that the others would soon be back to help his adversary, and the fear that the pain all over his body gave him, weakened the blows he managed to inflict.

By moving rearward as he fought, he backed up against a bush. At bay, he was able to fight a bit better; but the fighting soon drove him into the bush, and there he fell into a badger hole. The old fellow did not try to go around but plunged right in after him. The bush was on a little knoll. There

was some snow between the stalks; but the badger had cleared the snow from his den; and so in falling, Bob got clear of the old fellow for a second. Instead of using the time to better his position, he turned and fled.

His lead was short. He felt as he ran, that all three were again after him. He knew that stopping to fight them was certain death. He was already round the bend and before him in the beautiful night were the flats he knew. A bit of courage came to him at the mere recognition of his own territory. If only he could endure till he got to the den. Very hazily he made out the frozen pool, the bushes beyond, and the den far up the incline.

They were nipping his haunches. They had almost torn the skin from them. He turned with a futile effort toward the den, the sight of which had fooled him, had made him think it was nearer than it really was. How could he ever get there? There was a sudden weight thrown upon his back that almost crushed him. Teeth buried in every part of him; and the snarls rose into the air, like the crackle of burning evergreens. What fighting he did, was now hopeless fighting.

The light in his fear-torn soul was fading when the report of a gun shook the walls of the coulee. Instantly the savage jaws released their holds. There was another shot

and another. It seemed to him that the very earth was crumbling. From behind him came a suppressed cry of pain. The old grizzly was dragging himself off. A short distance to one side of him another of his enemies was kicking in the throes of death.

As soon as he felt the weights removed from him, though he found it hard to keep on his legs, Bob got up and started painfully away. There was in possession of his mind the desire to get to his den, though he half knew that there was no longer the necessity for getting to it.

His nostrils, clogged with blood, cleared, and he sensed the Ogre and heard his voice. He saw him coming in the darkness not far off, and for a moment he did not know whether to run away from him or to run to him. He was too weak to run, however; and so he crouched to the ground. Soon he felt the hand on his back and on his head, and he knew that the Ogre had saved him from the ferocity of his own kind.

He was sick with a nauseous dizziness. Things seemed to whirl round through space, and he clung to the earth as if to keep himself from falling off. Through the confusion, the darkness, and the excruciating pain, came the Ogre's voice with a sweetness it had never had before. The presence of the man was

like den-walls around him, protecting him. All the terrors of the night had moved out of reach, unable to approach him; because the Ogre was there; because the intermittent stream of words held them off like a spell.

He began to worry that the Ogre might get up from his stooping position and go away and leave him. This fear stirred him from his dizziness and the desire to close his eyes. When the Ogre straightened up, he opened his eyes wide and rose anxiously to his feet, so that, should the Ogre start away, he could follow him at once, follow with the last drop of his waning strength; for the Ogre had turned god.



## CHAPTER XVII

### SOLACE

**H**IS falling on the snow and the momentary loss of consciousness sobered Bailey. He realized that he had allowed his passion to overpower him, and that it had taken him to the very brink of madness and death. He was glad that no one had seen him fall and that no one knew a thing of all he had gone through. From the distant east came the sound of a rumbling wagon. Some one else was going to the card party at Dicer's. He was now near the coulee. Hurrying down the incline, he plunged into its protecting shadow. There was a bush some distance from the trail. Bailey sank down on his knees beside it, remaining there motionless, till the wagon had rumbled down and up the slopes and had lost itself on the prairie beyond; then he rose as from a prayer. He felt better, as if he had really prayed, prayed with the intensity that makes prayer medicinal.

For half an hour he trudged rapidly along the coulee bottom, wrenching his ankles on stones and hard clods of earth; then feeling

that he was near his home and its impenetrable solitude, he slackened his pace.

"This is enough for you, Bailey, you damned fool!" he cried. "No more! By God, no more! Damn that woman!"

He stopped suddenly. He had heard something! From the other side of a turn in the coulee came the hissing snarls of fighting coyotes. Bailey shuddered. Somehow this snarling and yelping was associated in his mind with the struggle he had just gone through. He started to run. The snarling became louder. Like the crackle of fire it was.

Then suddenly the mists cleared away in his mind. The emotions that had been torturing him dropped down into the depths; and new and better emotions superseded them, emotions that were tinged with a sustaining sense of duty and a feeling of urgency. It all came to him clearly as if some one had told him what had happened. As Bailey ran over stones and through bushes, all the anger he had experienced against his pet was dissipated.

He caught sight of a heap of struggling animals on the flats, clear in the glare of the northern lights; and hastily lifting his gun, he fired into the air. At once the group separated. Like rats, Bob's pursuers turned to

flee; but Bailey was quick. He got one of them before he had run a yard and wounded a second who fled with a cry of pain. The light was not strong enough for him to try another shot.

He saw Bob rise painfully from the ground and stagger away toward the frozen pool; and he ran to him, calling him with a voice that pleaded.

"You pore little devil!" cried Bailey when he reached the wounded creature who crouched to the ground whimpering as a child. "They nearly ate y'u up. An' ef it weren't for me, they would 'a ate y'u up. You runnin' away from me! You stick to that house o' yourn an' be grateful for the havin' of it. You ain't a coyote no more! What's the use o' tryin' to be what you ain't?"

He ceased patting him and rose up to his full height, adding as he looked down, "Great God, there ain't no use! Who knows 'at better 'an I?"

Bailey urged him to get up and follow him. He walked off a few paces and called; and Bob, his tongue hanging out of his mouth, his sides throbbing and straining, got up and staggered after him a hundred feet, then dropped down, exhausted. Bailey walked back to him, talked to him, caressed him carefully, then urged him on again. A great sym-

pathy filled Bailey, a sympathy that flooded from his soul his own afflictions; and he would gladly have done anything in his power to alleviate Bob's perceptible pain.

He talked to him sympathetically and patted him as if he were a child; and he could tell that his talking and patting helped the wounded thing.

It was with a sigh of relief that Bailey opened the door of his shanty, at last. He urged Bob into the house though the creature was afraid to enter. When the lamp was lighted, Bob shivered and whined and crept fearfully to the closed door. But Bailey's voice and manner soon reassured him. The Ogre-god proceeded to examine his wounds, and the little coyote submitted to his handling with an obvious trust that moved Bailey almost to tears.

He made a comfortable nest for him, out of rags, laying it in the darkest corner of the room, back of the dead cook stove. Putting out the lamp, he stood near the nest and talked to him till he was sure he was dozing comfortably; then he stole quietly out doors.

Bailey walked back to the coulee with the feeling of a man who had had a great responsibility and had acquitted himself magnanimously. He picked up the dead coyote, and brought it on his shoulder to the barn where

he laid it on the roof and hurried into the house. He heard Bob whining when he reached the door and almost struck him, opening it.

"Afraid t' be alone, are y'u, you pore feller?" said Bailey so emotionally that he was ashamed of the sentiment in his voice.

Bailey had schooled himself in the long lonely years to regard all sentiment as mawkish; but this conception, as with most people who acquire that bad habit of thinking, had only restrained his emotions. When he had relighted his lamp and had built a fire in the fireplace, and Bob, terrified by the fire and the red light that danced on the walls, ran to the door and tried to get out, he strove to calm him with a degree of tenderness of which he would never have admitted himself capable.

But the inborn fear of fire in the coyote was difficult to overcome. Bailey was forced to leave his supper-making constantly, to keep him from trying to get out of the room; and his ceaseless, uncanny whining gave Bailey a weird discomfort, which he sought to dispel by talking out loud. After he had eaten his supper, Bailey tried to make Bob eat; but Bob would not touch a thing.

"Gad!" exclaimed Bailey, rocking himself and gazing at the coyote, "but y'u *have* had

a hard time of it, Bob, old boy. That little body o' yourn had a good deal of tearin' up. Yes, sir! The barb wire—the tail pulled off! This cuttin' up! that's the way o' this livin' business! Get cut up an' go hungry! Trouble an' pain all the time! That for you! Another feller, not a damn bit better'n you, a-sittin' on some lady's lap, all the time, an' feedin' on milk! It's a crazy world, a damned crazy world!"

Bailey laughed and Bob raised his ears, a worried look in his eyes. It struck Bailey as very amusing, the notion about the world being crazy. He wanted at the time to think of it as amusing, because it made him feel better.

"Men or coyotes," he went on, "it is all the same. We haven't it a bit better'n you have it. One man's born with a spoon in his mouth an' another with a knife in his back." Bailey laughed uproariously. He considered the last sentence extremely humorous, and he experienced a desire to have some one to tell it to. Having no one, he repeated it. "Yes, sir, one man's born with a spoon in his mouth an' another with a knife in his back. B'gad if it ain't so. A knife in his back a stickin' at him every day of his life. One man gets everything and another gets nothing—nothing, nothing whatever. Just how it's been—always—even when a kid."

Thus Bailey talked on for hours, gazing into the fire, his eyelids growing heavier all the while. Every time the fire became too low for comfort, he roused himself and placed more wood upon it. Each time the effort woke him up fully, he would go back to his philosophizing, the words coming more slowly as the eyelids in the heat of the fire grew heavy again.

The room was delightfully cozy. Only two things bothered him now. First he felt that he ought to do something for Bob, but he did not know just what. His brain was too drowsy to think. He felt, too, that he ought to undress and get into bed, but the effort that that arduous task demanded seemed enormous; and so he sat, procrastinating, until he fell asleep on the rocker. When he awoke, it was morning. His lamps had burned out, and the air of the room was saturated with the smell of burnt wick.

Bailey replenished the fire once more. He went to the door and, opening it, gazed into the sunrise. As he looked across what seemed a thousand miles of rolling plains to where the dawn laughingly reached up over the horizon, sending forth shafts of purple and red, like children stretching their arms after a healthy sleep, he felt as if he had been groveling in mire, creeping through a seemingly

endless tunnel and that now, at last, he had reached the light and the open. His eyes dilated as he gazed into the brightening sun. He thought of the card party. He could almost hear the shouts of farewell and the laughter. He knew they were only now going home. He envied them. He did not need to lie to himself. There was a pang in his heart, but there was also gratitude in his soul. He thought of all that would have happened had he killed Dicer. He could imagine the news spreading. He could picture some one of the neighbors riding into town on horseback to get the Royal Northwest Mounted Police to come out for him. He had been saved from the gallows. A voice within him pleaded with him never to sink into that perilous condition again; and with loud and sanguinary curses, Bailey swore that he would not.

He went to see whether the wounded coyote had been sufficiently wounded to have died somewhere in the coulee, but he could find no trace of him. Then he returned home and skinned the other one, singing over his work. In the middle of the morning he went back to his rocker where he soon fell asleep again and slept till three o'clock. A rap on the door wakened him.

When he first opened the door, he was cer-



tain that he was dreaming. He could not believe his eyes. There in the doorway was Grace Withers, still mounted. Her pony was restless; the vision moved about, slowly assuming a reality. There was Grace Withers, —red-tinged cheeks, blue eyes, wavy light brown hair protruding from under a brownish tam-o-shanter and a brownish striped woolen scarf.

Bailey lived through a long, emotional hour in that first moment. If Grace Withers noticed at all the shock, the bewilderment that crossed Bailey's face as a small cloud passes over the sun, it was only to read in it the ordinary emotions of a recluse of his type, surprised by the appearance of a woman. But as far as she could tell from the expression on his face immediately after that, he was neither glad nor sorry that she had come.

"I thought I'd take a ride this way and get some more pictures of Bob," she said with a pleasant smile, "but I notice that his kennel is empty. Has he run away?"

"Wa-ll," began Bailey, looking down upon the ground and shaking his head, "he did run away; an' I, like a fool, went all over the prairie lookin' for him."

With considerable excitement in which he glanced at her many times, he told her all that had happened, changing a few facts only so as

to conceal the motive behind his wandering through the night and over the dark prairies, telling even that he had slipped and fallen, almost breaking his skull. And when Grace Withers expressed her sympathy with him over his fall, expressed it with genuine concern, with the motherliness that is irrepresible in every good woman, Bailey felt like a big unhappy boy; and he had all he could do to hold back a tear.

What he had said of her in his anger, as he had shambled homeward, burning with passion was forgotten; and Bailey would gladly have offered his life to her, if he had thought that she would have any use for it. He did not invite her into the house, but he did ask her whether she wanted to see the coyote; and he was happy beyond expression that the coyote was at the moment in the house, even though the fact that the room was cluttered and upset filled him with remorse.

He wanted to apologize for the condition of his place, when he closed the door after her entry; but he could not find the proper words; and then Grace Withers was so absorbed in Bob that he half believed that she did not notice it. While she stooped to pat the coyote and talk to him, he hurriedly put every pot and pan under cover.

"Mr. Bellard, have you any kind of paper that I could make some sketches on?" she asked, suddenly, while Bailey was hastily gathering the dishes on the table, into a heap.

Bailey stopped. He wanted her to think that he was trying to recollect where he had put some. He knew that he had nothing he could give her and was very much ashamed of the fact.

"Th' only thing I have," he said finally, "is some store bags."

"That will do," she assured him. "I don't need anything better. You see I shall copy these sketches afterwards on real drawing paper."

He searched around in his cupboard till he found two sugar bags that were without grease spots.

"Good," she said. "Just what I want. Now, if I can have a magazine, something to draw on, and a pencil, I'll have a perfect outfit."

Fortunately he did have a pencil and a magazine. When she seated herself near the door, he threw a few sticks on the fire; and then he sat down on the rocker so that he could look into the fire and at the same time see her. Bob eyed the stranger suspiciously, but he was too weak to move very much.

"That fireplace that you have there," she said slowly as she worked, "must be a great comfort to you on the long winter nights."

"Yes, it is," he said, turning to look into the flames as if he were, for the first time, really considering it. "When I'm away somewhere, I'm always a-thinkin', 'I wish I was home b' my fire.'"

"There is something so beautiful about an open fire! There must be a touch of the artist in you, Mr. Bellard. No one else around here cares enough about such things to have built himself one."

She stopped talking, bit her underlip, and squinted her eye, pointing her pencil at Bob who raised his head slightly, in alarm.

"Yes," she went on almost absent-mindedly, "I wouldn't have a home without a fireplace. I wish they had one over at Dicer's."

"And they could have one," suggested Bailey, "if Al wanted to take the trouble to make one."

"I know it," said Grace Withers. "I have thought several times of what you told me that day when I was lost and came here. It is strange, isn't it? Most of the people here have splendid barns and wretched homes. That struck me the first day I came. I noticed it all the way out of town. Big beautiful barns and small uncomfortable homes.

You certainly have the right idea, Mr. Bel-lard. If you can't get some comfort out of life, what's the use of living?"

Bailey's eyes glowed with enthusiasm. It was not only what she actually said that thrilled him but what he felt, she implied.

"Yes, I know what I'm a-talkin' about," he said and immediately regretted having started that way. "I don't care whether I lay up any money this year or not; but I have my bacon an' my coffee an' plenty of wood; an' I live." Here he was alarmed at the threadbareness of what he was saying; but she was so absorbed in her drawing that he felt perhaps she had not heard everything he had said.

"That's all that's important," she said, abruptly and very softly.

Bailey was silent. What he had said he knew to be false. He thought how barren and dreary his life was, and how happy he would be to have "some one like her" with him; then truly he would live.

"How nice and cozy it is here," she said, throwing off her scarf, laying down her pencil a moment, and looking into the fire.

"I wouldn't take the best home in New York for this," he said boastfully. "I know those homes are fine. I know they cost a lot o' money that somebody's got to work half his life away for; I know that to put my house

next to one o' them 'd make everybody laugh; just the same I say I wouldn't take any place in the world for this home o' mine. When I go crawlin' around over the cold prairies, hungry and tired, this shack shines for me when I see it. An' I come in here an' build m' fire and put the kettle to boilin' an' it begins to sing an' the steam rises—well, I may be livin' like a coyote, but I think I'm as happy as those who live in them better homes."

"You are probably much happier, Mr. Bel-lard."

"That's right."

"Yes, there's so much to worry about over those rich homes and those fine things."

"That's it!"

"It is not only the worry of getting the money to buy them with and to keep them looking well. No matter how nice a place you have there is always some one you know who has a more beautiful one. No matter how nice a dress you have to wear, some one has a better one; and to go out in the same dress too many times makes you feel ashamed of it. When you get into a place like this which makes you see things in their natural simplicity, you realize what a dreadful worry living in the large cities is."

"Oh, I know it. I lived enough in Calgary once to know what it's like; an' I tell you, I wouldn't take all of Calgary for my little farm."

In this vein they talked till Grace Withers had made half a dozen sketches; and feeling the early trace of evening in the air, she left.

When the hoof beats of her horse died out of hearing, when the blessed little form on the pony disappeared from view, Bailey left the window where he had followed her with his eyes, feeling like a hungry man who had filled himself with sweets. He opened the door and looked out. Never had life seemed so lonely. And never had life and his lot seemed so hopeless. He thought of all he had said and wondered what had made him lie. Then he closed the door with a feeling of disgust with himself and went to prepare his evening meal. Fortunately for him, he was so tired and sleepy that he lacked the energy to run, or he might have attempted to run after her.

As the evening approached and the night lowered, that sleepy feeling grew heavier; and in his heart, without the use of a single word, Bailey fervently thanked the forces of life for the richest of its gift—sleep. To want to sleep, he felt, was the only desire that

one may satisfy. When at last he got into bed, he pulled the quilt over his head and covered a smile, even as the smile covered a heart pang.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### LOVE BORN OF WIND AND SNOW AND FROST

ON Monday morning Bailey awoke with an inspiration. Grace Withers had spoken of a carbolic salve which she had, and which she said he ought to put on Bob's wounds. The first thing he thought of when he got up was that he might go that afternoon, just when she let the youngsters out, and get some from her. He smiled a faint-hearted sneering smile, because he did not believe in salves or pills. He was a bit disgusted with himself for this chicanery. However, as the morning progressed he ceased thinking about the artifice in his proposed visit and gave himself over entirely to the anticipation of seeing her again and talking to her.

Bailey knew that he would act just as reticently as ever and that he would accomplish just as little as he had accomplished every other time he had seen her, in the way of getting nearer to her; but he could not help that. He knew that it was useless to censure himself and torment himself. He only hoped

that each time he did see her, he would lose a little more of that reticence; and he dreamed of the time, at the end of the school year, when he would be very much more familiar; and then—he did not dare to put his hope into words. He did not even like to think of it with too much definiteness; for reason demolished every hope he built, and in vagueness he was safe from the thrusts of his fatal logic.

At noon he became aware of an ominous change in the atmosphere. He went out several times during lunch time and observed the menacing sky, almost black in the north. The sun was struggling through leaden clouds south and west of the zenith. The wind came along from the north in a mighty stream with almost overwhelming gusts now and then. Thistles and dead golden rod, broken off where the hard drifts of snow held them, came flying along and went rolling on with a melancholy hint of human helplessness.

"My luck," cried Bailey every time he re-entered his house and swung the door to with a vehemence that slightly relieved his temper. "Just because I want to go, it has to storm. It *will* storm too. Looks like a blizzard. I'll go early."

Until two o'clock he held out. By that time the storm was even more apparent. The

wind was stronger, the air was heavier and looked as if snowflakes had already filled it up. Bailey swore and cursed. As the sun lowered, sundogs appeared, their brassy leer striking terror into Bailey's heart; but he felt now that he must go. It had become an obsession. He felt as if it were the most important thing he had ever been called upon to do.

It was sheer madness to start away over the prairie at a time like this, but Bailey was mad. Even he himself half sensed that fact. A blizzard on the prairie is not a force to trifle with. And knowing the country is no security. When the blasts drive snow into the eyes and seal the eyelids, when the darkness of the storm makes one's reaching hand invisible, a knowledge of the geography of the prairie is of no assistance.

Bailey stopped halfway. He did not know whether to venture farther, or to hurry back. He did think of the possibility of getting to the schoolhouse and being obliged to remain there with Grace Withers until the storm had ended; but he also thought of Bob and his cow and chickens—"who knows how many days it may last?"

The storm had been threatening all morning. He realized that the children must have gotten worried earlier in the day, and in all

probability teacher and pupils had gone home hours ago. So he finally turned back and the wind stopped his cursing. He could hardly breathe. He realized how mad he had been to have ventured out on such a day. He tried to hurry, but already the wind was so strong that he found it difficult to walk. He looked upon the inopportune raging of the elements as evil designed specially against him; and the rankling bitterness intensified his physical misery.

By the time he reached the foot of the hillock upon which his shanty stood, the pail with which he watered his cow came clattering down the hill to meet him. A sudden gust of wind, stronger than any he had yet faced, stopped him dead still; and he was forced to turn around so that he could regain his breath. When he started up the hill again, he was struck by a volley of straw which the blast had torn from the roof of his barn.

For half an hour Bailey struggled with the wind, cursing his luck and his life, trying desperately to lay sticks and stones over the rest of the straw to prevent it from blowing away; and the gale shrieked with fiendish laughter as it brutally played with his sensibilities.

It took him fifteen minutes to cover the two

rods of seething space between his barn and his shanty; and when at last he broke into the house, he could not see a thing for a few moments.

He completed the expression of his impotent rage, while he removed the icicles from his mustache and unsealed the lashes of his eyes which were frozen to the lids. Sitting down to rest a few minutes, he talked to Bob and patted him, for the coyote was very uneasy, apparently sensing something amiss with the world; then he took down the long rope which hung coiled in the pantry and started out again, his milkpail on his arm.

With all his strength, he held on to the door, opening it just wide enough for him to slip through; then, shutting it again, he tied one end of the rope to the knob, letting the rope out slowly as he moved toward his barn. At the barn, he tied the other end of the rope to the doorpost and hurried in.

He found the cow very restless. Her large eyes were dilated to twice their size, and from her huge, wet muzzle came a low murmur of anxiety.

"What's she a-thinkin' of?" muttered Bailey, looking at her meditatively.

She was standing, head lowered, tied by the horns to the manger. There she had stood for hours and weeks. He, at least,

could go where he wanted to and when he liked. It seemed unfair, this power that he wielded over the dumb beast. But he did not dwell upon the injustice very long. He was as helpless in perpetrating it as she was in enduring it.

As he milked and listened to the dismal wailing of the wind, pulling at the creaking barn door, he was reminded of a story he had read in which a ship is tossed about on a stormy sea. At the time he had read the story, it had imbued him with a thrilling gratefulness for the solidity and the comfort of his home. Now, thinking of it, that gratitude came back to him; and he hurried his milking eager to return to the house.

When his chores were done, he struck out for the shanty. Back bent, eyes half shut, clinging desperately to the rope, he thought again of the ship at sea. He thought of himself plodding through the storm, of the cow alone in the dark barn, the coyote whimpering on his berth, and the possibility of some farmer caught upon the open prairie.

Sea or prairie, man or beast, nature was an endless reiteration; life but tiny lights burning here and there in a vast darkness, where the universal winds were forever trying to blow them out.

His eyes were sealed with snowflakes and

frozen tears, and Bailey dashed, head first, into his door, before he knew that he had arrived. When at last he got into the house, he was obliged to sit down near the door a few minutes to regain his breath. But, his chores done, his door locked securely against the raving elements, the prospects of a delightful fire and a warm meal rather good, his resentment against the blizzard abated rapidly.

"Gad, boy!" he cried, addressing Bob, who lay on his bed of rags, "y'u c'n be right glad you're not in that house o' yourn just now. It's a terror! Jes wait till we get the ol' fire a-goin', an' the bacon sizzlin'. It's about time you ate somethin', ol' pal, y'u know it. Y'u don't want to be dyin' on me now."

The day waned hastily. The crackling fire in the fireplace grew brighter as the light faded, its red glare touched the frost pictures on the windows and tinged the delicate tracery with sunset tints. The glowing of the cook stove, the steam rising from the kettle spout like happy spirits released from captivity, soaring away to the frost-lined ceiling, and the smell of coffee and frying bacon gave the room a comfort that not all the creaking of the walls and the lamenting of the wind could lessen; and Bailey sang as he worked.

He ate his evening meal in the best of spir-

its and tried in vain to induce the coyote to eat, but Bob refused to touch anything but water.

Bailey cleared away his dishes and put the room into perfect order. Then he proceeded to make himself as comfortable as possible. He wished that Grace Withers were there to see the place just then, for it had never looked better. He decided to read over again the sea story, the helpless ship still being tossed about in the gloomy billows of his imagination; and, finding the magazine, he took the rocker in his left hand and dragged it across the floor, toward the fireplace. The dragging noise was specially loud and Bailey stopped it abruptly. He thought he had heard a voice calling through the storm for help.

For a moment Bailey was frozen to the spot. He was assailed by a thousand fears and felt himself weighted down by a nameless responsibility. He had removed his boots and rubber overshoes and was standing in his woolen socks. He was thinking of the need of getting his boots and rubbers on again; but could not decide upon what to do.

"Can it be that I was mistaken?" he asked himself, listening intently.

He sat down at last to put on his boots and stopped in the middle of the act.



"I'm crazy," he muttered.

He pulled the boot off again and threw it down; and walking to the door, he placed his ear against the crack where the door and frame met. All he heard was the howling of the storm. Then it came to him that Bob was whining. He turned to the coyote. Bob's head was raised, and he was sniffing at Bailey.

"S'matter, Bob?" he asked. "Can it be that you made that noise?"

By the time Bailey went back to his rocker before the fire he was wondering whether he had really heard anything at all. It occurred to him that Bob might have heard the sound just as he had heard it, only to turn to the possibility that his own nervousness had affected Bob.

He sat down and tried to enjoy the warmth and the comfort of the fire but he was too restless. Every creak of the walls, every sigh of the wind seemed to transform into the sound of a human voice. His nerves, taxed to the utmost, his illusions turned into rank hallucinations. He began to feel the presence of Grace Withers somewhere in the chaotic swirl outside his door. His imagination pictured her with tormenting clarity, her form bent over the back of her struggling pony.

He went to the window, breathed on the frost that lay thick on the glass and tried to look out; but beyond the reflection of the color of his own skin, there was only darkness, broken by the flakes of snow that were whirled against the outside of the pane.

He tried to read. It was impossible for him to concentrate upon the words. He came to the phrase, "struggling in the waves," and threw the magazine upon the table. He saw her struggling in the waves of the blizzard. Not appreciating the dangers of a prairie storm, she had allowed herself to go somewhere, from school, had lost her way, and was wandering around.

"Gad!" he cried, getting up, stretching, and sneering at his foolishness, "it'd be a damn good storm 'at 'd bring her here. L' me see, jes f'r the fun of it."

He went to the door, seized the knob, intending to open it wide enough only to get his head out; but the whole fury of the storm hurled itself at him. The door was torn from his hand and driven back with an explosive bang against the wall. The blast broke into the shanty, almost lifting it from its foundation, tearing paper from the walls, sending objects clattering through the room, and putting out the light. He shut the door, after a struggle; and when he had re-

lighted the lamp he found small drifts of snow all over the floor and on the table. Bob was gone from his bed of rags.

"Bob!" cried Bailey with a hoarse, frightened, guttural voice, and from under the table came a whining response.

The room, light again and the wind shut out, Bob came from under the table, dragging himself painfully, a child-like look of fear in his eyes. On the rags he lay down and shivered emotionally as Bailey patted him and talked to him; and in this patting and talking, Bailey soothed himself, as well.

Most of the night Bailey sat before his fire, looking into the flames, thinking of Grace Withers and listening breathlessly to every untoward sound of the howling and the tugging of the storm. A hundred times he left his seat and pressed his ear against the crack between door and door-frame. Each time that he returned to the fire or to Bob, his doubt as to whether he had really heard a human voice grew greater.

It was two in the morning before Bailey decided that he had heard no voice at all and turned into bed. Nevertheless, he peered into the chaotic whirl of snow many times during the following day, expecting to see something that corresponded to the image which he could not drive from his mind.

For three days and a half the blizzard raged. Incessantly the wind wailed, varying only in the intensity of the periodic gusts. Repeatedly the helpless snow beat against the walls and the windows, slid drearily down the incline of the roof and piled up against the shanty and in hilly drifts over the plains, there to be tormented with constant and endless re-formations.

The windows were completely covered with a frost so dense that it looked like a thick layer of snow. Along the cracks in the walls and over the heads of the nails there were frost lines and frost buttons; and in one corner of the room, fine powdered snow percolated through some unseen crevice, falling in exquisite drifts upon the floor. It was impossible for Bailey to leave his house for any length of time and merely opening the door so that he could get snow to melt for his daily supply of water was a hardship.

There was nothing for Bailey to do but attend to the monotonous routine of meals which served to relieve the pressure of dragging time. In the many years on the prairie, he used to like these blizzards. They gave him excuse for the laziness which he relished. He used to spend the long hours on his back, smiling defiance at the futile rage of wind, basking in the comfort of his fire, and reading

some silly love-story with furtive but heart-felt appreciation. But his contact with Grace Withers had provided him with an all too absorbing story and the hope for, and the dread of, its climax had stirred up in his soul a restlessness that had sickened his taste.

During the long hours between meals Bailey sat near the fire and talked with Bob, looking down at him or into the red flames, fearlessly expressing every emotion in his soul. To those words, in that endless flow of words, that were above the others in pitch or that carried more emotion, Bob would reply by a strenuous effort to wag the stub of his tail or by just looking up to his god with his moist, bloodshot eyes.

Often, when Bailey was busy washing his dishes, his pots and his pans or baking bread, Bob would gaze into the fire with fearful fascination. It had taken him some time to accustom himself to fire. He had inherited an instinctive dread of it, which had to be overcome. He had quickly reached the understanding that if he did not go too near, it would not bother him; but he never lost the feeling that he had to watch it all the time. His eyes dilated, he would gaze at the flames as with an avaricious delight they licked the sticks of wood. It was a ferocious animal strangely and happily confined to the fire-

place. But at times it would snarlingly reach out toward him. Sparks and small pieces of burning wood would break out with a sizzling snap and strike at him or near him.

He had begun his adaptation to this phenomenon with the feeling that his god would protect him, as he had protected him against all other creatures that wanted to harm him; and he ended with a craving for the warmth of the fire, as soon as the fireplace turned black and lifeless. Still, when he woke up suddenly during the night and raised his head in alarm, the first thing he would do and the last upon going back to sleep was to stare into the deeper blackness of the fireplace.

On the afternoon of the third day of the blizzard when the unseen sun lowered and the dull gray light turned duller, the wind began to subside. The great volume of snow held in the air by the winds dropped. The atmosphere became transparent again with a light blur of sad milky coldness in its transparency. Fields of dead white stretched away to the gloom at the edge of visible space, and the remaining winds carried waves of thin dry snow and sent them in helpless showers over the harder drifts. Evening settled down with a weighty melancholy and the night sighed like an exhausted being, approaching the rest of death.

But the next morning burst upon the hushed prairies with sunny gladness. The sky was perfectly clear and the sun shone with almost painful radiance. The prairie, a china sea with frozen waves, stretched from horizon to horizon. The last breath and sound of the tumult was gone from the atmosphere as if the very air had frozen.

The first thing Bailey did was to search the dazzling whiteness for an imaginary heap, the image of which he had carried about in his mind; for, despite his reason, Bailey had not yet gotten rid of the fear that he might have really heard some one crying for help. He started away, ostensibly toward his barn, skimming the deeps on his snowshoes, and searching for the heap on the even whiteness; and then, when he came within sight of his barn and saw that one corner of it had caved in through the weight of the snow and the force of the wind, he abandoned his search.

All morning long, he worked over the barn, struggling to get it closed up again. When that was done, he removed, with much groaning and cursing, the snow that had packed into it through the opening. So, too, he groaned and cursed as he dug deep into the drifts to get at his wood pile, though he really enjoyed the hard work.

Bailey knew what was coming. All signs

foretold a lowering of temperature, and he worked without stopping for lunch. In the early afternoon the temperature began to drop steadily and perceptibly. By nightfall it was twenty-five degrees below zero, and in the middle of the night, Bailey was awakened by the whimpering of Bob. Bailey himself was very cold, in spite of his heavy quilts, and he was obliged to get up and build a fire. For two weeks, that fire did not go out. Dropping down to sixty below zero, the temperature hovered between that and thirty.

Only once a day did Bailey dare to go to the barn; and when he would come back he would set his milk pail with the milk, frozen almost solid, near the fire to thaw out. He would remain near the door, and with a handful of snow, he would rub his frost-bitten cheeks and nose.

In spite of the severe cold, Bob grew well, rapidly, and soon ran around the room playfully, like a pup. He learned to know every object in the house, what he might play with and what he must not touch. Bailey spent many hours trying to teach him tricks which he hoped would amuse and delight Grace Withers when she came again. Within a week, Bob knew what Bailey meant when he told him to go and get anything, though he



rarely brought what was named. He would bring a dozen different things before he brought the right one; but his mistakes amused Bailey; and when he did bring the right thing, Bailey was delighted. Bob learned to know when he had responded correctly by the change in Bailey's voice and the change of expression on his face. So interested had Bailey become in his rôle of instructor that the days of the cold spell, many as they were, passed by with an amazing rapidity.

The scabs on the coyote's body, where the wounds had been, began falling off and new hair appeared, closing in and covering up the scars. Unable to go out and move about very much, sleeping most of the time, he was glad to get the exercise involved in Bailey's teaching him, and looked forward to the games they played so eagerly that a dozen times a day he would mistake Bailey's serious duties about the house for a call to play. He regained his former bright appearance and began to take on fat again.

When by the rise in temperature one day, Bailey realized that the cold spell was broken, he promised himself a visit to the schoolhouse next day. He formulated many excuses for going and kept substituting better ones for preceding ones as the afternoon went

by. At night he sat before his fire and dreamed of his trip on the following day, visualizing every detail of it, rehearsing all that he would say, and coaching himself in the mannerisms that would make him appear friendly without betraying his real feelings.

Bailey whistled contentedly as he went to his barn the next morning. Bob was following in his tracks, picking his way close behind his feet. Over all the world of hard, sparkling snow, poured a dazzling shower of sunshine. When he milked his cow, Bailey sang with the fervor in his heart; and Bob sat near the door, from where he regarded him with an expression of wonderment. But when, his milk pail full, Bailey started back to the house, he discovered John Mallor on horseback coming slowly up the trail.

"Merry Christmas, Bailey!" cried John, a few feet away.

"Same to you!" replied Bailey when he had gotten over his surprise. He hadn't thought about Christmas. "Goin' t' town, John?"

"You bet!" exclaimed John Mallor with the happiest of smiles. "Them rich relatives of mine in Calgary have asked me to spend the rest o' the winter with'm. No more prairie hovels for John Mallor, for a while."

"Lucky man," commented Bailey, thinking how he would feel if he had some rich rela-

tives to go to. "What's the news of the district?"

"Dicer's lost Madge."

"He did!"

"Yah! Shame too. The finest mare in the province!"

"How?"

"She went rollin' by the straw stack. Jus' let'r out for a little jaunt an' he wasn' goin' to, either. Says jes like th' devil comin' along and gettin' it into his head to let'r go awhile. Meant to keep'r an' Pete in th' barn all winter."

There was a moment's pause and then John started off.

"Wa-ll, Bailey, see y'u again in the spring!"

"Maybe y'u'll leave the old prairies!" suggested Bailey.

"Wa—ll," began John slowly as his horse went on, "y'u c'n jes bet I'll stay if they get me a good job. I'm sick of this dog's life. Be good, Bailey!"

"Christmas!" thought Bailey as he trudged rather sadly back to his house. "Christmas, hey! Wa-ll. School must be closed for a couple o' weeks. Must 'a been closed during the blizzard."

He called eagerly to Bob who had run off to investigate the white spaces about the shanty. A strange and unaccountable fear

took hold of him. The loss of the little coyote he now felt would be a calamity. Bob came loping back to him, wriggling emotionally; and Bailey seized his collar with a trembling hand and almost dragged him to the house.

In the house he gave him plenty of milk. He talked to him constantly as he went about his work; but his heart was heavy. In his mind were thoughts of John Mallor going away, of Christmas, and above all of Grace Withers and the fact that school was closed.

Most of the day he sat by his fire, thinking of these things and patting Bob. And he patted Bob more that day than he had ever patted him before. A fondness for this strange little companion, a feeling born of wind and snow and frost had taken its permanent place in Bailey's lonely heart.

## CHAPTER XIX

### HER SCARF

**B**AILEY waited several days, expecting, since the weather was now mild, that school would open again with the new week. He planned to go to see Grace Withers in the afternoon of the first school day; but on Monday, he thought it over and decided that it would be wrong to bother her on the first day of the reopening of school. Tuesday, he decided that he really had no good excuse for going at all; and Wednesday the weather was again threatening. He censured himself for having procrastinated; and Wednesday evening by the fire, he told Bob that no matter what happened, he would go the following afternoon, and that he would take him along.

"She won't know, an' I don't have to tell her where I was a-goin', nor why either. That's foolish. I got a right to go somewhere. She don't expect me to be always hangin' around my shanty."

And Thursday afternoon, he did go. He waited till half past three, and then started away in great haste, feeling, suddenly, that

his clock might be wrong; for it was already rapidly growing dusky. By the time he reached the schoolhouse, the little building was deserted; and over the whole white prairie lay the sadness of evening.

He reproached himself for his stupidity and started back home; but when he had gone off a few rods, he stopped. He looked about to see whether any one, anywhere, was seeing him. Never had the prairie appeared more lifeless, and Bailey was glad that it was so. He turned and went back to the schoolhouse.

He found the last of the day's fire still burning in the stove. The room was warm and comfortable and the smell of chalk was in the air. On the black-boards there were still signs of the colored Christmas decorations, rubbed out in the middle where the boards had been used.

The spirit of Grace Withers hovered about the darkening room. Bailey wanted to stay there, but he was not altogether comfortable. He felt like a thief. He reflected that, should any one catch him there, his purpose in being in the little schoolhouse would appear suspicious. Several times he went to the windows and looked out and away over the barren plains. Reassured each time, he turned back into the room, and gazed at every little thing

that belonged to her with the sadness of one who had come upon the ruins of his long deserted home.

He was looking at the desk where she sat every day. He could almost see her there. The yearning in his heart was like a load upon it. Suddenly he saw something on the floor, immediately below the hanger on which she hung her coat. He picked it up almost greedily, and stood looking at it, as he held it suspended from his hand. It was the striped brown scarf that she had worn every time he had seen her.

He knew exactly what had happend. He realized that in taking her coat off the hook, she had dropped it without knowing. He was certain that she had not missed it till she had left the schoolhouse. It occurred to him that she was in all probability thinking that she had lost it on the road home.

He handled it with trembling fingers. There was something living and sacred about it. It brought her even more vividly into the room. He felt as if he were touching her. He walked with it to the doorway, held it back of him and looked out in both directions. The trails that he had broken in the snow coming, and she going, lay white and motionless, like things asleep. Bailey re-

turned to the room almost sneakingly; and, his hands shaking, he lifted the scarf and pressed it to his cheek.

Bob who had been regarding him curiously, looked up into his face. Bailey was ashamed as if it had been some person who had caught him in the silly act.

"Bailey, you're a damned fool!" he said, folding the soft thing, touching it with his nose as if it had been a flower, and storing it away almost tenderly in the bosom pocket of his coat. "But we're all damned fools, anyway, Bobby, boy. Come along home."

He decided to go to see her the following day and to tell her that on his way to Holmstead's, he had found the scarf on the trail. That night he placed a big box against one of the windows to make sure that no one could look in, put the board on which he kneaded bread against the other window, and spent several hours before the fire, pulling the scarf from his pocket, repeatedly, and examining it over and over as a miser might gloat over his gold.

There were two beings in Bailey's soul; one mad and the other sane. The sane one, fortunately, kept guard over the mad one. The sane one laughed, and the mad one wept. "Give the thing back to-morrow and don't



be crazy," urged the sane one; while the mad one fondled the little thing and pressed it to his lips.

He went to bed ashamed of his folly; yet, when the light had gone out, his naked arm reached for it again and again in the darkness.

He did not take it back the next day, nor the day after that. By the time he might have been able to persuade himself to give it back, he was ashamed to do so; for it showed wear that he could not have explained. Then he became obsessed with the fear that some one might some day come upon it. He would be accused of having stolen it. So he promised himself to destroy it.

Every night before the fire he decided that he ought to burn it, and every night he postponed the sacrifice. In spite of the fact that not a human being had set foot in his house for weeks, Bailey guarded the windows every evening and put the scarf away with infinite care.

One day in the following week, he started out toward the schoolhouse, intending to talk to the schoolma'am, and show off his coyote who now followed in his footsteps wherever he went. But when Bailey came within sight of the school building, he was overwhelmed by a feeling of shame. He felt that he could

not face her, with the knowledge of the scarf and the image of himself madly fondling it, in his mind.

He went back home; and for a very long time he made no attempt to go to see her, nevertheless, hoping every Saturday or Sunday that she would come to see the coyote. Thus, in that empty hope, the winter rolled by.

## CHAPTER XX

### FROM GOD BACK TO OGRE

**I**T had been a very hard winter. Cold and wind and snow had followed each other, or had come together, with a relentlessness not often experienced even in that rigorous country. But spring arrived early. March broke smilingly upon the prairies. The belated Chinook winds daily devoured great volumes of snow, exposing the earth, brown in spots; and filling the prairie air with the laughter of ten thousand rivulets. With a joyous haste, pools gathered and glistened on top of the snow, and tore down the coulee slopes, like hosts of children at play. Rose bushes raised their wet, sleepy heads, like mermaids rising out of the sea with the water trickling from their hair and over their faces. Ducks came in countless flocks from the south and filled the starry nights with the sweet music of their love songs. And from Bailey's shanty roof the thawing dripped with the sound of drums.

These were the outward changes. In the souls of living things, a seething ferment developed, making them restless and sending

them forth to search. Bailey, like all other people, was affected by these subtle forces in the air, but Bob became uncontrollable. Forever looking away over the spaces, forever whining with boundless yearning, he would be constantly starting away, coming back obediently, when called, only to start off again at the first opportunity; and Bailey watched him with anxious care.

One day, when the prairie brown spots had grown very much larger and the smell of wet earth was strong in the air, just as Bailey and Bob started out for a walk, a pair of horns appeared over the rim of the coulee. The red bull's head rose into view and stopped. Bailey stopped too; and swearing at him in loud words, he ordered him to go down where he belonged; but the bull shook his huge head and defiantly stepped up on to the prairie level, sending forth a bellowing challenge from the depths of his massive body. A number of cows' heads rose up behind him, their horns like the fixed bayonets of an invading army.

Bailey tried to decide upon just how he ought to meet that challenge. He had his gun in hand and would have gladly fired a bullet into the monster, knowing how much Dicer valued him. Suddenly there came a growl from below, and Bailey looked down

at Bob. His muzzle toward the bull, his fangs exposed, the coyote glared savagely at the intruder.

"Go get him!" cried Bailey. "Go get him, Bob!"

Bob felt the need of doing something. He looked up questioningly a moment at Bailey and turned again toward the bull. Bailey repeated his orders, pointing at the bull with his hand. The bull who had taken a few steps forward again, stopped with obvious uncertainty. Bailey started toward him on a run; and encouraged thus Bob ran slightly ahead. Deciding that he had better go, the bull turned about. The cows turned with him and raced down the slope.

"Go get him!" cried Bailey again, now running faster.

Bob lost his fear. His god near him, the bull hurrying away, he became rash. The great big animal was evidently afraid. He followed him all the way down the slope. On the flats the bull turned upon him. Bob was surprised for a moment, but he bared his teeth and growled so menacingly that the bull swung around and scampered across the flats. Now, Bob was absolutely sure of himself. He followed so closely upon his heels that he was tempted several times to nip him. Across the flats they went, the cows running on wildly

ahead. Up the other slope, away over the barren prairies, they plunged through melting drifts of snow and plowed up the oozy earth.

The bull had had his experience with dogs. They were too small to engage in battle, and so fleet that he could never know just exactly where they were when he fought with them. Much as he would try to have them in front of him, they had a pernicious way of keeping behind him, no matter how fast he turned. And this particular dog seemed to him to be more savage than any dog that had ever assailed him.

Bob enjoyed the sport. He drove him more than a mile west of the coulee before he abandoned the chase. He sat down and looked after them till they had gone over a hill and out of sight; then he got up and trotted leisurely away over the plains, sniffing at bushes and burrows as he went and pursuing birds and early butterflies.

It was a delightful holiday to him. It was very long since he had had the pleasure of roaming about at will. When he had had the privilege, he had been small and weak and afraid. Now, he was big and strong, and his experience with the bull made him think himself invincible.

All day he roamed about happily, exam-

ining everything in his way with an intense curiosity; and toward evening he came back to the coulee. Beyond the other slope was the shanty as it used to appear to him in his puppyhood. A strange uncomfortable feeling came over him at the old familiar sight. It was as if his association with the Ogre had been a dream. He had awakened from a long sleep, and there, before him, was the black peaked roof and the smoke belching from the chimney. It made him peculiarly unhappy and he returned to the old den under the rose bush, near by.

A strong, partly familiar scent hung in the air about the opening, and Bob's hair around his neck bristled. He sniffed long and carefully, and then with sudden impulse, plunged down the passageway. All the way down, passion and fear rumbled in his throat. As soon as he came to the lair, he knew that it was unoccupied at the time; but the smell of his old grizzly enemy was so discomfoting that he did not stay down there a moment.

Nor was he, after that, particularly anxious to remain near the den. The sun was sinking rapidly and the spring evening was cool. He went down the incline, loped across the flats and trotted up the other ascent. As he turned over the top of the second slope, and saw the light in Bailey's window, there came over him

an ineffable gladness. Life with his god was satisfying and secure. The weakness he had suffered was a thing of the coulee and the den; the strength he enjoyed was a thing of the shanty and the man.

He was within a hundred feet from the house, when he became aware of something near by and stopped dead still. In the early dusk, less than fifty feet in front and to the side of him, was the grizzly coyote, coming from somewhere in the east.

At first Bob was afraid of him, but his fear was short-lived. Something had happened to the savage old beast, since the awful night in the coulee. He was perceptibly timid and emaciated and one of his forelegs had been amputated. He stopped to regard Bob for just a second, then swerved and limped painfully away, going rapidly, but with a ludicrous hobble.

A sense of his own superiority dawned upon Bob and the impulse to run after him and destroy him turned his head in the direction of the fleeing coyote; but Bailey's door suddenly opened and the cry of "Bob," rang through evening air. Bob hesitated. The desire to punish the old marauder, now that he felt he could, urged him to pursue him; and the reddish light of the open doorway in which the beloved form of his god was cut with such



clarity, drew him to the shanty. While he hesitated, the old grizzly vanished.

Bailey scolded him roundly for having run away. Bob, however, was not interested in what Bailey was saying. He rubbed his whole body against Bailey's legs, like a cat, and pushed his wet muzzle into Bailey's hand, begging for the caresses which he preferred.

But the vision of the old grizzly would not leave Bob's mind. Night after night, he dreamed of him; and often he would growl so loud in his sleep that he would wake up Bailey, who would scold him for it. Every time Bob went out of the doorway, he would turn his muzzle toward the coulee and sniff; or he would sit down near the door, and gaze away in that direction, expecting to see the old savage coming again. And then one day, he did come.

It was the most delightful kind of a spring day. A southern breeze brought currents of warm air, laden with the fragrance of growth; and vague, alluring sounds, kept calling to action.

Bailey was milking his cow, and Bob was racing madly around the barn, when a rider on horseback appeared. With him came a dog and, to prevent any fighting, Bailey ordered Bob into the barn.

The visitor was Milton Baker, a farmer

who lived about eight miles north of Bailey's place; and he wanted Bailey to skin a cow that had died the night before. Bailey hesitated for a while, seeking some excuse for not going, then promised that he would; and Baker rode away.

Bob was not at all happy when he was ordered into the kennel; and when the netting door was fastened upon him, he looked up at Bailey and whined appealingly.

"Too bad, ol' boy," said Bailey regretfully, "but 'at there dog o' Baker's 'd tear y'u t' pieces, if I took you along!"

While Bailey was in the shanty, Bob endured his uncomfortable confinement; but when he saw him go away, saw him pass out of his vision and heard his steps growing fainter in the distance, he went wild.

All morning long he ran round and round the small space just as he had run around the first day he had been confined there. All morning long he howled and yowled and pushed against the netting on the door. It was the first unpleasant thing that the hand of his god had wrought against him, since that dreadful night when he had rescued him from the coyotes.

The world outside of his kennel was warm and enchanting. Folds of earth rich and enticing rolled away to the coulee and beyond

to the horizon. There was the coulee and the den and the endless hills and sloughs with birds and bugs and countless fascinating things to see and to chase; but he could not get out.

Toward noon he wearied howling and pushing and turning round and round and ate some of the food that Bailey had put into the kennel. He even lay down a while; but lying still was very hard on such a day; and the wind persisted in coming into the kennel with tales of nameless things, wonderful and promising.

It was after one of these forced rests that he saw the grizzly coyote, coming stealthily from the coulee, hobbling along leisurely, sitting down every once in a while to examine the landscape. Bob growled. His hair bristled, and his eyes almost protruded from his head.

A few yards from the kennel the grizzly old fellow discovered Bob. First he swerved cowardly and started to limp away, then suddenly he turned and came back very slowly. He realized that Bob was helplessly closed in, as if he were caught in a trap. His eyes often turning to the shanty, he approached the kennel, regarding Bob's fuming on the other side of the netting, with interest. He sat down some two rods away, the stub of his

leg, pointing like a finger to the ground, and calmly studied the house and the kennel, watching Bob with concern, but assuming an indifference to him. Then he got up leisurely and limped past the kennel.

Bob was furious. He threw himself repeatedly at the netting of his door, whining with chagrin, because it would not open, and even biting it in his exasperation. But when the coyote passed out of sight, he calmed down a bit and listened. He knew that he was somewhere in the yard. Suddenly he heard the cackle of the excited chickens in the barn. He heard the cry of terror from one of them rise above the cackling of the others; then the noise died down. Bob knew that his hateful enemy was doing what his god had often warned him not to do. He was imbued with a sense of responsibility and importance; and when he saw the old brute once more heading for the coulee with one of Bailey's hens in his mouth, he fell upon the netting with such force that it gave way; and he found himself free, outside.

The old thief had turned to look back; and seeing Bob just when the latter sprang after him, he dropped the hen and scampered for the coulee; but he stopped abruptly. He knew that he could not run fast enough, now. He turned about courageously, and lowering

his grizzly head as if he tried to hide his defect, he growled and showed his fangs.

Bob had been loping toward him with his greatest speed. At sight of this show of defiance, he slackened his pace. Conscious of the old fellow's stump of a leg, he stepped toward that side to see it better. As soon as he moved, his enemy moved, just as eager to keep that side of him out of sight. Bob soon perceived his advantage over him. For several minutes he sought to get at the bad side of the old savage; and in his eagerness to move quickly enough, the old fellow stumbled. He picked himself up in time to escape Bob's fangs, but Bob now knew how best to fight him.

He saw how difficult it was for him to move around, saw how eager he was to precipitate the battle, to clinch so that in one spot he could bring his old strength and wisdom to bear in his behalf; and so Bob planned not to clinch, not to get too near, but to wear the old fellow out, defending his position. He would strike out for a nip at his haunches, leap away and turn swiftly again, keeping as much as possible toward the stump.

The old coyote, however, understood the situation just as clearly; and in one of these moves, he reached out with all his energy and closed his teeth upon Bob's hind leg. Bob

whirled about with such force that he knocked him over. The crippled coyote righted himself hastily, clinging to the leg in his mouth; but being on his weaker side, Bob was able to seize the scruff of his neck. The grizzly beast let go of Bob's leg, in an effort to get at his throat; but the instant Bob felt his leg freed, he swerved to the side, again knocking him over; and before he could defend himself this time, Bob had seized his scruff once more, now having the same direction as his adversary and being, as he wanted to be, on the side of his stump.

His hold was not in itself a serious one, but through it Bob was able to keep his antagonist helpless. Snarling and growling with such passion that the slaver dripped from his fangs, the old coyote hopped around violently in his effort to shake Bob; but Bob hung on. The crippled beast shook and hopped with increasing desperation, rapidly wasting his energies.

As the old fellow hopped and shook, Bob strove to send his teeth deeper into the skin, even though the long hair almost choked him. The more Bob strove to sink his teeth, the more rapidly his antagonist hopped and the harder he shook; and then, suddenly, despite his caution against it, he tripped again. In an instant, Bob released the hold on the neck;

and before the old coyote could prevent it, Bob had him by the throat.

The grizzled veteran of many battles began to fear that this one was his last. Like a flame, flaring up with the blast that extinguishes it, his desire to live rallied his waning forces; and he jerked and pulled and twisted with a violence that dizzied his antagonist.

But Bob, sensing his victory, yearned for it with greatest passion. Whatever else might happen, he realized that his jaws must not relinquish their grip a hair's breadth. Though his brain sickened with motion, though the grizzly's claws tore his sides, he endured it all, centering his strength and his attention upon his teeth, and those teeth slowly and murderously came together.

The shaking ceased. There came a coughing, gurgling sound from the punctured throat in his mouth. Then blood! The thing that had been fighting, fought no more.

As long as the muscles quivered, Bob held on, waiting for the last bit of reflex action to die away. Then, glad to be relieved of the weight, he dropped it, and sprang away—a final caution that was needless. Panting for breath, his tongue lolling, his bloody teeth exposed, his sides throbbing, he looked down upon his victim a few moments, sniffed

at him, then, the red luster still in his eyes, he ran back to his kennel.

For almost an hour he lay there, licking his wounds and resting, lifting his head now and then to see if, by chance, his enemy was trying to rise again. When he was quite rested, he trotted over to the carcass of the coyote, sniffed at it a while, and was about to go off on a tour of inspection, when he discovered, near by, the chicken that the old grizzly had killed. He picked it up, carried it to the kennel and sat down to eat it.

There Bailey found him, when he came home. Bailey was surprised to see him outside of the kennel. As he looked at him, Bob raised his head; but he did not get up, so Bailey walked over to him. As soon as he reached him, he saw the heap of feathers and recognized them as those of one of his fowls.

To Bailey this was a calamity. This had been his best laying hen. The coyote had to be punished and taught not to touch the chickens for, within a week, he should lose all of them. He knew how hard it was to teach a dog not to kill chickens after he had once killed one. He thought of the dog that Elmer Holmstead had been forced to shoot, because he could not break him of such a habit.

The punishment he was obliged to inflict, he realized, must be a severe one; so he seized



Bob's collar and pressing his muzzle down into the heap of feathers, he beat him with his other hand and kicked him with his foot.

At first Bob just *ki-i-ed* helplessly, then with anger equal to Bailey's, he began to struggle to free his head. Unable to break the hold, he turned his head and reached up in an effort to get Bailey's hand into his mouth.

Bailey got frightened. He released his hold quickly and stepped back. Bob did not wait for him to make his next move. He leaped out of reach and loped away for the coulee. Down the slope he went and across the flats, waded right through the stream that now coarsed along the bottom of the coulee, loped up the other slope, without stopping and plunged into the passageway of his den.

He examined his lair, hastily, growled a moment as a challenge to the strong scent of the old grizzly that was there, then lay down near the passageway and shivered. He was miserable, and he was muddled. He had fought a great battle and had won. But with this victory he had lost everything.

In his mind was the image of his god; it was coming across the flats toward the den; but as it came, it changed its form. His god had turned back into the Ogre.

## CHAPTER XXI

### GOOD FOR EVIL

**F**OR some time, Bailey stood near the kennel and cursed. He was very angry because of the loss of the laying hen, and he resented bitterly the coyote's attempt to bite him.

"After all I have done for the beast," he thought.

But what bothered him more than anything else was the fear that the very creature he was cursing would never come back. After all, that odd little brute had shared his home with him. Bailey had ceased to look upon him as a coyote. Contact with the little animal, images in his mind of certain almost human expressions on his face, side glances and various childlike acts, had given him a strong feeling of comradeship for his pet. The old routine on the lonely homestead would seem a thousand times more monotonous for want of this living thing to talk to and caress.

Bailey turned to look toward the coulee with a heavy feeling in his heart. Suddenly

he made out a peculiar object on the ground some hundred feet away and went over to see what it was.

"A coyote!" he exclaimed. "How did that get here?"

He made a thorough examination of the dead animal and concluded that Bob had killed it. As soon as he came to that conclusion, he straightened up. His eyes half shut thoughtfully, he continued looking down upon it. He remembered now that when he was beating Bob, he had seen several patches of matted hair on his body.

"He was wounded, an' I beat him!" muttered Bailey, remorsefully. "I'll bet he did not kill that hen at all. This here coyote came and stole the hen, an' pore ol' Bob went to pr'tect me, an' I beat 'im f'r it. That's what it is, as sure as I'm alive! He never touched them chickens before. He jes saw the coyote carryin' the hen, an' he became so excited, he broke through the nettin'. Damn it, anyway! Why didn't I think before I went a-beatin' 'im? Damn Baker an' 'is dead cow! Beatin' 'im, an' he fightin' f'r me, an' hurt all over. No wonder he tried to bite me!"

Bailey started away anxiously toward the coulee, disturbing the solitude with his frantic calls:

"Come, Bob, come, Bob, ol' boy!"

"He went down the slope at break-neck speed and crossed the flats, stopping beside the stream. The little rivulet had been growing, daily, in size, fed by the steady melting away of winter's heavy snow drifts. It was not very deep, but the water was cold and because it was running, it seemed harder to cross than it really was.

It occurred to him that Bob might have gone back to his old den. He walked north along the side of the stream, till he came directly opposite the den, but there the creek was deepest and the water turning a short distance farther north made so much noise that Bailey's calling did not carry very far. It was fast growing dark, and the spring night was cool; so Bailey turned homeward, calling futilely as he went.

But it was when Bailey had done his evening work, had eaten his supper and was sitting as usual by the fire, that he realized fully what a loss Bob's departure was. The room was oppressively empty to him. He got up from the rocker a hundred times during the evening and went to look out into the night, in the hope, each time, that this time he would see him. When he went to bed, he left his door open; so that if he did come prowling around, he might come in.

Bailey fell into a doze, waking suddenly

sometime later with the illusive feeling that he had heard something pattering around on his floor. He listened breathlessly for a while, but he could hear nothing. He became aware, as he listened, of a gnawing pain in his head, that he now realized he had been feeling all evening. At the same time, a nervous tremor set in all over his body.

"That were a savage look on his face," he muttered, thinking of Bob and seeing his head all too clearly as it had looked when he had been beating him. "He'd 've ate m' hand right up! B'gad!"

He began to speculate upon the chances of Bob's having gone back to his savage state. He pictured him coming into the house, while he slept, and attacking him.

"A coyote's a wolf, a'ter all!" he muttered and got out of bed, carefully closing and bolting his door, adding as he returned to his bed, "I'm not a-feelin' good, t'night."

He tried very hard to force himself to sleep. His efforts were not only futile, but they helped to keep him awake. He began to fear that possibly Bob had already entered, before he had locked his door. Was he under his bed? He called to him. His own voice terrified him all the more.

He got up, determined to put an end to all his torturing aberrations. He relighted his

lamp, replenished his fire, and sat down half dressed before his blazing fireplace.

The light and the warmth made him feel somewhat better. He brewed a cup of tea and drank it, rocking himself rhythmically, and peering into the flames. When he had set his cup back upon the table, he took the scarf from under his pillow and studied it. He was tempted to throw it into the fire. He was ashamed of its condition, and even more ashamed of the hours he had spent fondling it. Its fragrance had long been dissipated, and it was not quite as clean as it had been.

He wanted an excuse for going to see the schoolma'am. He felt that somehow she might help him out of his troubled state of mind. If the thing were clean, he could take it back the next day. He could tell her that he had found it on the trail. He might dirty it up a bit more and wet it, so that it would look like a scarf that had lain all winter under the snow. He almost shuddered at the thought of thus defiling it.

Just as he was putting it away again, he happened to look up toward one of the windows; and it seemed to him that he had seen something pass by on the other side of the reflecting glass. Trembling in every limb, he hastily put on the rest of his clothes, seized his gun, and went out. He walked around

his shanty several times, calling to Bob as he went.

Finally, he returned to the house and with lighted matches he peered into the shadows under his bed, then opened the cellar door and lowering his lamp examined the empty, grave-like hole till he was convinced that there was nothing down there. By that time, he realized that he was being driven about insanely by a fever.

He carefully replaced his lamp, on the table, reclosed the cellar door, and sat down again determined to get himself out of the state of mind that he had slowly driven himself into since he had met the schoolma'am. It was her fault, there was no doubt about that, even though he knew that she had not deliberately set out to ruin his life. He felt that she owed him assistance anyway. As he considered it and reconsidered it, he concluded that she would in all probability be glad to help him. Surely she would be willing to talk things over with him. And that was really all he wanted, he assured himself. He wanted to talk matters over with her in an honest manner. He would confess to her that all he had said about his way of living was not so. He would tell her that he had reached a point where he could no longer endure the loneliness. He would say that he

had to have a change, and he would ask her for advice. Could she suggest what he might do, if he went to a city?

When he had carefully rehearsed and revised his proposed arguments in every detail, he set about to find a good excuse for approaching her. He was afraid of his original plan to take the scarf back to her. He was afraid that she might have known, somehow, that she had dropped it in the schoolroom. Possibly she had seen it drop but had forgotten to pick it up.

Suddenly he hit upon a much better plan. He would tell her that the coyote had run away. He would tell her that the thing had become savage, and that he thought he ought to shoot it. That would bring her to his place. Once she had come, he would invite her into the house and bare his heart, tell her how he suffered and ask only for her advice.

He tore off the blank space on the last letter that he had received from the pelt buyer, barricaded the windows, and sat down at the table to write. He first wrote his note on a grocery bag; and when it was finally transferred to the better paper, it read as follows:

*Madam, Miss Withers:—*

The coyotes run away. It is very strange how he acted and I thought you'd be interest to know about it. I was for shootin him at once but I thought you'd feel



bad an I didnt. I think may be I better shoot him. If you can come over Saturday, I would be glad to get your advise.

Yours truly,  
MR. BAILEY BELLARD.

It seemed to him to be a very fine note, written in correct form as he remembered the correct form should be. He thought the threat of shooting the coyote was very clever; for though he, of course, had no intention of carrying it out, it would surely bring her in haste to protest against it.

It was already Thursday. Next day would be Friday. His only chance of getting the note to her in time lay in his going at once; so he took his gun, filled his pockets with shells and started away.

A little walking made him feel considerably better. It was a beautiful night. The sky was perfectly clear and the stars glistened with unusual brightness. Small patches of snow, still left here and there, illumined the prairie night as with street lamps. The trail was broken in every hollow by pools of cold rippling water; and from some of these, when Bailey trudged around them, a single pair of ducks would lift and fly away, with a rapid whirring of wings.

Down in the coulee, where the trail crossed it, the water was deep. A small, bridge-like

culvert had been laid there, the year before, but the water was now a foot above it. Bailey was exasperated. He stopped before it and tried to devise some method of getting across without getting wet. It seemed sheer madness for him to go wading through the icy water with his felt boots. And for what? It seemed as if everything were always setting itself against him. He began to weaken. A little voice urged him to turn back and to cease making a fool of himself; but angered, as if the little voice were a thing he craved to defy, he plunged right through the water, and walked rapidly up the other slope, cursing and swearing at everything and anything.

There was an uncanny silence about the schoolroom, and by contrast with other times in which he had been there, it seemed almost hostilely cold. But he had no desire to remain there for any length of time. He placed the note in the middle of the desk, set the ink well upon it, and hurried out. On his way home, he was glad that he had done what he did; and with that feeling of satisfaction, he slept well.

Saturday morning, he began to worry about how that note might have affected her. Until three o'clock in the afternoon, he was certain that she was going to come; then grave doubts arose in his mind. From that time until four

o'clock, he still retained some hope. She might have been unavoidably delayed. But when the big hand of his watch turned over the last of the fourth hour, all his hope abandoned him.

He had been sitting on the door sill, looking away over the prairie, watching for her. Near his shanty, the winter snows had gone completely. Under the withered grass of the fall, green blades were pushing their way up; and over the wet plains lay a tint of glistening green. Birds of all kinds broke into his vision and swept out of it. Gophers rose at various points on the ground, stretched their elongated bodies, whistled for joy and defiance, and ran after each other, like children playing tag. But the human form had gone from the earth.

It seemed impossible to him that she should have read his note and so contemptuously disregarded it. He was certain that if she had seen it, she would have answered it somehow, even if she had been unable to come. Of course he had his tormenting doubts. The note was really a silly one. He could see that now. It was stupid of him to have called upon her so childishly and for such advice. It would have been much better had he just asked her to come, without telling her what for.

And suddenly there began to play upon the stage of his feverish imagination a little tragic comedy, that fanned the flames of the fires within him. He saw the hateful Dicer boy come into the schoolroom before the teacher had. He saw him approach the desk and discover the note. He saw him read it and heard his shouts of laughter and ridicule. He saw him take the thing out doors and read it to the rest of the children. He even saw him tear it up.

Bailey jumped from the door sill as if some one had struck him from behind. His anger was so intense that it hurt him. He did not know what he was doing. He started away in great haste and a few yards from the door he turned back for his hat. He had been sitting without a hat on. By the time he got back to his door he forgot about his hat. He merely shut the door and went on again.

From that time on until he reached the coulee where the trail from the east cut across it, his feet moved with steady speed. He did not know just exactly what he was going to do. There were so many things that he wanted to do, one more violent than the other. He meant to do whatever seemed to be more practical or possible when he got to where doing anything was feasible. This time as always, it was the whole district, the whole

human race that had sinned against him; and whoever met him first, him he would combat.

He wanted to get hold of the "Dicer Kid" and make him confess. But when he reached the culvert down in the coulee, and saw the Dicer boy on horseback, coming down the opposite slope, he was completely bewildered. He turned hastily to the side and gazed away into the coulee as if he were looking for something he had lost. By the time the boy was crossing the stream, Bailey had come to the realization that the fellow may not have seen the note at all. He may not have even been to school that day!

"Hello, Bailey!" said the boy quite innocently.

"Why ain't you in school?" demanded Bailey almost stuttering; and as soon as he had uttered the words, he realized how stupid the question had been.

"School now, Bailey," said the boy with a grin. "Ain't y'u mixed in y'ur days, a bit, Bailey?"

"'At's right too," said Bailey, ashamed. "It's Saturday."

"Yes, an' pretty late in the day for school, Bailey. Anyhow there ain't been no school in a week. The teacher's went back to Noo York."

The boy had gone on. He shouted back

something to the effect that she had given them only a six month's contract, but Bailey neither heard nor cared to hear. He tried his best to act normally while the boy could possibly see him. He stood looking absent-mindedly at the running stream, as if he were looking for a ford; but he was listening to the pony's hoof beats. He could tell when the horse had climbed up the slope; and as soon as he heard the patter of its lope on the prairies above and out of sight, he turned north along the coulee bottom, beside the stream, and hurried like a clumsy bear that is surprised in the woods.

When the winding coulee shut off the trail, which the momentary presence of the boy had filled with multitudes, Bailey gave expression to all the madness in his shattered soul. There poured forth from him a stream of curses and invectives that made the walls of the coulee echo with the bitter protests of his heart. His feet went so fast, there was no time for his half blind eyes to warn them against the many puddles that leered at him from all over the coulee bottom. His boots, his trousers and his coat, even his face and his hands were spattered with mud.

"Damn her! damn her! damn her!" he cried over and over again. "Why did she come into my life? I have been crazy ever

since she knocked on my door; and by God, she just goes off and couldn't even say good-by as any man by right deserves. What does she think I am? She laughed when I talked of the folks around here, and now she's laughin' at me. Showin' the picture around of the coyote and the other coyote! Two coyotes! That's what she's sayin', damn her heart and soul! After all, by God, I got the form of a human being! What harm for her to come and shake this hand that'd 'a worn itself out for'r!

"Show the picture round to her friends! By God I'll show her! That's Bailey, an' y'u can't go walkin' all over Bailey, coyote as he is. It's my home an' jes as good as hers, and that's my clothes an' jes as good as her father's! Give me his money an' his clothes, an' I'll look jes as . . . I'll show her, by God! I'll show them all. You beautiful face . . . you city woman! You think you can come and tear up Bailey's life, an' then go way an' laugh! Well, by God, you'll cry too! Jes you wait!"

What Bailey intended to do or could do, he had not the least conception of. The threat alone relieved him. He meant to return to his shanty, take his gun and go off to the town. There? There he'd see what was best to do.

He stumbled on headlong through mud and water over stones and around clumps of bushes. A feeling of heavy weakness was upon him. His resolution to do some violent act, to vindicate his manhood, to cry out with his own blood against this thrust down deeper from the plane of human kind, this attempt to confirm the conviction of his neighbors that he was only a coyote, worthy though it seemed of his last drop of blood, was overwhelmingly colossal. He felt as he shambled along, wet and cold, that between him and her now yawned the vast chasm of her civilization. Oh, he was so helpless! Any one who desired it could tread upon his heart, and he was utterly incapable of defending himself.

He came to the flats opposite his shanty. The stream widened out there, and he was obliged to wade through the water to get across. He went in without hesitation. What misery could the cold water bring to him who was saturated with misery! He stepped on a slippery stone just as he was about to reach the level ground and fell with a groan. He picked himself up, cursing, but the curses died on his lips. Less than a hundred yards away on the coulee flats, stood the red bull, pawing the ground, bellowing his challenge to him. Behind the bull were a



multitude of cattle, horns lifted, eyes glaring, looking on at his approach.

To Bailey's sick mind there was much of the dream about what he beheld and in his own inability to stir from the spot upon which he stood. From the time when he had been a boy, he had had an instinctive dread of these monsters; and Bailey had never picked up an agricultural Journal without finding at least one report of some man who had been gored to death by a bull.

He looked about for something to back up against. There were no trees and no stones big enough to protect him. There was no use plunging back across the water. The cattle were still wet from just having crossed the stream. There was no use running; for this monster could easily outrun him; besides running from a bull is only an invitation to him, to pursue. What hope Bailey had lay in defying him.

He wanted to stoop and pick up some stones, but he was afraid to do that. A move from him would perhaps mean a charge on the part of the bull. He felt that his defense for the present was best served by motionlessness. To charge at the bull might frighten him; but it might also precipitate a battle, and in a battle his death would be inevitable.

"What shall I do?" he cried.

The cattle seemed to have lost their senses. It was as if they had never seen a man before. Their stupid eyes glowing with fear and curiosity, they moved in a wide semi-circle around him. Halfway up both the slopes they went, keeping away, out of fear, their eyes upon him. The bull grew more and more angry, roaring, bellowing, pawing the earth, and approaching Bailey who stood motionless as if death had already seized him.

He forgot his former troubles. Grace Withers had left his mind like a puff of colored smoke, dissipated in the higher air. He began to move. Something had to be done. It seemed impossible that that old coulee should turn into his sepulcher. And yet Bailey felt that possibility almost as the natural, the inevitable. A crushing thought came upon his mounting fear, now pounding at his temples—was this the end of that long rolling tragedy, his life? A coyote dying like a coyote!

He bent down at last, gathered two stones hastily and shouting at the bull, he waved his hands frantically. The cattle began to move in the distance around him. But the bull accepted his challenge and started to run toward him. A numbness took possession of Bailey's limbs. The end . . . the dread of

dreads! There came to him the last urge. He sought to control himself. He would run. He looked about. Suddenly on the rim of the coulee he saw the form of a coyote. A coyote head, with ears erect, looking down into the coulee curiously.

Bailey had been shouting in a half-hearted attempt at defiance, a shrill dry cry. But at the sight of the coyote, there came a slight relief to his throat.

"Here Bob! here Bob!" he called frantically and a strange crazed smile came over his face. "Go get him!"

He had both arms extended, one to the bull, and one toward Bob. The bull turned his head a moment and saw the coyote. He shook his horns at him.

"Go get him, Bob, old boy, go get him!" cried Bailey again.

The coyote broke down the slope on a run, and the bull turned completely toward him. Bailey attempted to get away. There were awful weights holding down his feet; but he moved them any way, a step at a time. He heard the familiar growl of Bob and the tears came running down his cheeks. "God!" he muttered, "how I will pay you for this, Bob ol' boy!"

While Bailey moved across the flats to his shanty, the cattle broke and rushed away to-

ward either side. Behind him he heard the rumbling of the bull, his splashing through the water, and the snarling of Bob.

He did not turn to look back. His white face was wet with perspiration. Before him the slope was free and clear. He hurried, going as fast as he could go; and when he got at last within sight of his shanty on the prairies above, he turned in time to see the cattle stampeding across the plains west of the coulee.

Bailey went into his house and shut the door as if he would prevent any one from coming in. He was ashamed, and felt as if the fears that had no further stimulation were still clinging to him, somehow. He dropped into his rocker and panted for breath, looking every other moment toward the windows, with the constant and annoying feeling that some one might have followed him and was looking in.

What a day it had been! He was so weary, that he cared no longer what had happened or was going to happen. Had any one come to him with news of Grace Withers he should have driven him out. Never, since he had become a hermit, did he crave his solitude more. He felt as if his neighbors, his kind, had surrounded him and had crushed him with their

bodies. He felt as if they were yet transfixing him with their thousand derisive eyes. He had fled to his burrow, and he wanted to recover in peace and seclusion.

The sun had moved over to the north, and the spring days were long. As Bailey, rocking himself, began to feel easier, his mind went back to Grace Withers. He cursed her and swore at her image, and strove to tear it from his mind.

Then suddenly he thought of the note he had left in the schoolroom. Possibly no one had yet been there. He must get that note before any one should see it. If only he got hold of it! If only no one had seen it! If only he held it once more in his hands!

He took down his gun, loaded his pockets with cartridges, and started away as if his life depended upon getting to the schoolhouse in the shortest time. Back bent, eyes on the ground, feet striding rapidly, he trudged over the rolling prairie with invincible doggedness. Until he reached the school teacher's desk, his mind was a cloudy chaos.

The note was there untouched, exactly where he had left it. Not a soul had been there. A relief that was almost happiness came over Bailey. But he was not happy. Now he was obsessed by the desire to get back

to the refuge of his own four walls. If only he could get all the way home without meeting any one!

He went back as rapidly as he had come. When he came to a turn in the trail, he cut across the prairie, to make sure he would meet no one; and when he reached the coulee, he felt as if he had won a great victory.

He hastened along the winding stream and leaped over the bit of water to the flats. If the bull was there now, he would turn him into carrion. But the bull was not there. He looked around for Bob and called a long time; and at last, disappointed, he started for home. But when he had covered half the slope, he became aware of something behind him, and turned so frightened, that Bob who had finally come to him, leaped away again.

"Bob, ol' boy," he called, stooping down and coaxing fervently. "Come on, ol' boy. Y'u're the best friend I ever had."

He pleaded with him for the longest time. The coyote would start toward him, stop, look to right and left, then move on a bit nearer. It seemed ages to Bailey, before he finally was able to touch that nearing head. But as soon as he had touched him, Bob abandoned caution. Peace was declared and goodwill re-established.

When Bailey patted him, Bob fearlessly

reached up and licked his face. Bailey did not pull away. In the soft voice which Bob had learned to like, he kept talking to him. One was as happy over the reunion as the other.

"You an' I, Bob, ol' boy. You an' I together. We stay where we belong, an' you jes see what I'll do for you. Come on, let's go home. A warm fire an' plenty to eat. We want no more, do we, Bobbie ol' boy!"

And Bailey was as good as his word. When the evening chores were done, and they sat down by the fire, Bob was so full of milk and meat, he could hardly wag the stub of his tail. Bailey rocked himself, audibly airing his troubles, stopping only occasionally to caress the coyote whose desire to be patted was insatiable.

When he had barricaded both windows against the evil eyes that never came but forever tormented him, Bailey took the note from his pocket and read it over. It seemed to him now unendurably stupid, and he thrust it into the fire. As he watched it burning, he was taken by another impulse. He hastened over to the bed and dug out the scarf. He sat down with it and held it in his hands. It seemed an awful thing to burn it, but burn it he would. He looked from window to window, then almost contemptuously

he raised it to his nose. All the fragrance was gone from it. It was a dead, withered flower.

He folded it up compactly and threw it into the flames.

"That ends it, Bailey!" he muttered. "You've been fool long enough. It's all over."

But it wasn't quite over yet. Instead of the beautiful flames that he would have liked to see consuming it, he saw a mass of charred substance darkening the flames, emitting clouds of black smoke, resisting this destruction like a living thing. Of course he knew that wool does not burn well, but he hadn't thought of it. It was gruesome. It seemed to writhe with the agony of death; and as he tried in his anxiety to poke it into the flames, it fell forward to the cement platform before the fireplace. There it not only writhed and smoked, but it filled the room with a feeling of burning flesh.

Bailey seized it with his bare fingers, trembling as he did, and hurled it back into the flames. Bob had taken refuge under the table and his eyes peered from the shadows like two glowing embers sprung from the burning wood.

Bailey wanted to open the door and the windows to let out the smell and the smoke;



but he was afraid that Bob would escape.

The smoke soon rose to the ceiling and the room cleared. Bob realized that there was nothing to fear any longer and came out from under the table. But Bailey, still afraid to open the door, opened first one window and then the other.

He put his head out of the second window and looked about. It was a beautiful, clear, cool spring night. The prairie world lay hushed and motionless. He was still feeling the uncanny sensations that had come over him at the resistance of the scarf to the flames. He was still trembling slightly. He thought he might go out for a little walk, and he thought again that he preferred to remain in the house; and just as he was in the act of pulling his head back into the room, he saw a figure coming toward his shanty from the trail.

If Bailey had had the necessary time, he would have put out his light and would have pretended to have gone to bed. His anger mounted. Why should anybody come to bother him now, on this particular night? How could he turn him away? Who could it be? Damn him anyway!

Until the man rapped on his door, he fussed and fumed, fanning the air with his coat in the hope of ridding the room of the smell of

burning wool. He waited several minutes before he asked the stranger in, and then his voice bore little welcome.

"Hello, Bailey, ol' man!" cried the visitor when Bailey had opened the door.

Bailey squinted his eyes. It was John Mallor.

"Y'u back, John?" he said quietly and he could see that John's face fell at his evident coldness. He tried to make amends. "Come in an' sit down."

"I never knew before how far thirty miles can be!" said Mallor taking Bailey's rocker. "I'm purty near dead. I wan't goin' t' pay no man ten dollars to bring me home, so long I got feet; but I feel as if I damn near lost 'em."

Bailey tried hard to be sociable, but his attempts only aggravated him. Why did this fellow come to torment him at this of all times? It seemed to him that he would give anything to have his shanty to himself. If he had thought he could possibly persuade Mallor, with kindness, to go, he would have gotten down on his knees and cried in making his appeal; but that seemed impossible. Mallor would surely think that he had lost his mind.

"So y'u come back to the cursed prairies?" he asked sitting down near him.

"Cursed prairies," repeated Mallor with a significant shake of his head. "I'd a worn these ol' feet off with pleasure to get back to the ol' prairies, Bailey; an' I'm tellin' y'u the God's honest truth. I wouldn't take the hull of their damned Calgary for my little bachelor's shanty."

Bailey looked up at Mallor, showing interest for the first time.

"Don't you let 'em tell y'u nothing about the cursed prairie, Bailey. It's God's own country, I tell y'u. Their cities with all their money is hell. When a man gets to be a prairie critter, he should stay a prairie critter; an' if he can't get no happiness out o' the prairie, he can't get no happiness anywhere this side o' heaven."

Bailey responded by a significant shake of his head. He noticed Mallor looking at the coyote.

"You remember the wild pup coyote?" he asked.

"Shucks, he's as tame as a dog!" said Mallor.

"He's got dog in 'im too," said Bailey and noting that the little beast was uncomfortable, he called to him and fondled him playfully when he came to him.

"I'm goin' t' get me a dog," Mallor went on, "an' John Mallor an' 'is dog'll be happier

than John Mallor could ever be with the swellest dame in Calgary!"

Mallor then went into details. He told of all the horrors of living with people who had criticized his every move; and raised his hands as if in prayer when he spoke again of his old shanty where he said he hoped to spend the rest of his days in freedom.

Bailey's face brightened. It was as if he himself had gone through all Mallor's experiences. His little home became dearer to him. He offered Mallor food and when the latter accepted the offer, he brought forth his best. Mallor ate with both hands, insisting that this food was better than the best food in Calgary. Bailey believed him to such an extent that he too developed an appetite.

"They even got me a woman, Bailey," said Mallor, laughing uproariously, his mouth full of bread; then pointing to his head, he added, "but thanks to this ol' head o' John Mallor's they never hitched us up."

Bailey laughed and John Mallor laughed. Then Bailey saw a shade pass over John's face when he went on.

"Naw, it's better, Bailey. I ain't blamin' her either. Y'u see we're different animals, different all t'gether. There ain't no sense in denyin' it. Not that we ain't jes as good. They can't put that over on me. From all I

seen, with all their learnin' an' knowin' a lot, they ain't a damn bit better'n us, an' their wiser ones know it, too. But we're different. That's all. They don't need to go to jail f'r it, an' we don't need to go to jail f'r it. But it's John Mallor f'r the prairies, an' they can have all their swell cities. It was hell, Bailey. B' God, I was afraid I wasn't standin' right, or sittin' right, or eatin' right, or doin' anything right. It was hell! An' believe me, Bailey, I was a-thinkin' many a night of my little shack where I can do jes as I damn please!"

Bailey shook his head emotionally in the desire to express his agreement with him, and over his face spread a melancholy smile.

"You jes learned it, John," he said. "But I knew it all along. Every word you're a-sayin' is true. Gad, how I knew it. Yes, sir. Every word you're a-sayin' is true!"

When they had finished eating, Bailey invited his guest to stay over night, a thing Bailey had never been known to do before. John Mallor first insisted that he ought to go, and said over and over that he was yearning for a look at the old shanty; but he stayed, and they talked all night.

Dawn had already begun breaking upon the prairie, when John Mallor departed, inviting Bailey to come over to his

place that night, so that he could be just as hospitable; and Bailey, standing in his doorway, with the feeling of one who had just found a promising friend, assured him that he would.

Tints of purple and pink blazed at the northeastern horizon and, a space above the earth faded softly away into the sleepy blue of the early morning sky. Over the hollows, still filled with the last shadows of the night, hung a gauzy mist. On Bailey's barn roof fluttered a flock of redwing blackbirds, their hilarious greetings to the morning coming upon the air like the lulling rush of water.

When John Mallor reached the foot of the hill on his lumbering way to the trail, the blackbirds lifted and flew away; and a drowsy silence fell upon the earth. Bailey was sleepy and tired; but he would not go to bed. He sat down on the door sill and half closed his eyes. He could just make out the hazy form of Mallor on the trail, but his eyelids kept dropping in spite of himself.

Suddenly a prairie lark, perched on a post near the barn, pierced the silence with the glad wakefulness of his song. Bailey opened wide his eyes and was surprised to see Mallor coming back hurriedly.

"Pore head I got!" shouted Mallor when Bailey going to meet him, had neared him.

"But y'u can't blame me, Bailey! I been gettin' the mail out every time I come from that town in the last twelve year; but I ain't never before had t' bring no letters from women for you, Bailey."

Bailey smiled. He accepted the letter that Mallor had fished out from the bundle of district mail, as if it had been the most commonplace thing that he could have received. Whatever Mallor said to him after that, however, he did not hear; and Mallor's second departure was a great relief to him. He hastened back to the doorsill, sat down again, and tore the envelope open with shaky fingers.

*My dear Mr. Bellard:*

I am sorry that I was unable to visit you and Bob before leaving. I had not expected to leave so soon. Something important forced me to pick up and go, but I must confess to you that I was glad to go—I had become pretty homesick.

I am writing this on the train, while crossing the flattest stretch of prairie I have ever seen.

There is one thing I wanted to speak to you about before I went away, but did not get the chance. You like to read. I know how hard it is to get reading matter on the prairie. Now, I have more than a thousand books at home, most of which I never get the chance to look at. It really makes me happy to think that I have found a way of putting them to use. So expect very soon a big box full of books which I hope you will enjoy in the long winter nights.

Take good care of my little Bob and keep him for me. Who knows—I may visit the dear old prairies again soon. I surely will some day.

With very best wishes, I am  
sincerely yours,

GRACE WITHERS.

Holding the letter in his left hand, Bailey dropped the hand to the door sill at his side, and looked away to the horizon. The early morning colors had given way to the bright glare of the full sun. The mists had lifted, and the fragrant earth seemed to throb with the love of growth.

Bob who had been asleep on his berth of rags, got up, stretched, and came over lazily toward Bailey. For a while he stood back of him, waiting for Bailey to turn around to him; then, unable to wait any longer, he poked his nose in between Bailey's arm and his side. Bailey turned round and began to stroke his fur; and in perfect contentment, Bob lay down beside him, enjoying the touch of his hand.

"So she's a-comin' again!" muttered Bailey. "B'gad! I hope so! Damn fine woman!"

He thought of all that Mallor had said, and the justice in Mallor's admission inspired him.

"We *are* different animals!"



Lost in thought, he had ceased stroking Bob. Bob raised his wet muzzle and pushed Bailey's hand up on his head. Bailey laughed and continued caressing him awhile, then got up.

"We got chores to do," he said sleepily, starting for the barn.

And all the way to the barn and while he worked, he whistled without cessation.

THE END













